

# ADAM

FACT • FICTION • HUMOR

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MURDER  
IS MUTUAL  
-page 30

K.M. DAVIS





# the quiet life

I'd screamed to the world, the cops, the Press, what I would do to her when I got out. I'd even sent her a childish threatening letter. And now she was dead . . .

SHE lay on the bed with her back toward the door, her autumn hair lying loose on the pillow. She was wearing a black lace night gown, sheer and short to a point of indecency. The room seemed full of the sight of her, the scent of her perfume, the conscious strain of mood music coming from the stereo in the living room, all very intimate. She looked very beautiful. Except that she was dead.

There was something almost obscene about her arms dangling over the side of the bed, white and bloodless with crimson on her fingernails. I gingerly grasped her wrist and flung her arm back across her body but the touch of her made me shudder. It had been a long time since last I touched her. Then I had been her lover.

The music in the next room cut out. There was a click and another disc slipped down, reminiscent of old times when we used to put a stack of 10 discs on so we wouldn't worry about changing them. Old times? That was a laugh.

There was a bottle of rye and a couple of glasses by the bed, encrusted with lipstick. I poured some rye into the clean glass and some slopped over on to the table. I put my handkerchief on it, scarcely bothering to mop it up. I wasn't thirsty, but I needed a drink and not only because she was dead. That hadn't penetrated yet.

It was like a dream. Maybe later it would gather up some kind of reality but now I was no more than a robot. Sure, I'd read about myself in some kind of book

or something I'd have wondered what kind of book was this who stayed in a room where a woman had been murdered, who left his fingerprints around, who touched the corpse even, and a drink in reach of the body. A book, a real dumb drudge, but I wasn't thinking. That was it, I was doing things without thinking because real people just don't walk up on near-murdered damsels living when they've spent the last three years wondering how it would be to have the pleasure of killing her.

I poured another whisky. Then the phone rang.

It was one of the new models, small, compact, pale blue, very much the louder model, in easy reach of the bed. The whisky had thrown me out a bit. I was feeling almost human.

"Hello?"

"Gee?"

"Yes. Who is this?"

"Never you mind, Charlie."

"My name isn't Charlie, it's—"

"A figure of speech, buddy, just a figure of speech. I know who you are."

"Well then—"

"Listen, Charlie, get out the small talk. I'll say all there is to say. You just listen, get me?"

The voice had dropped to almost a whisper but there was something more menacing to the undertone than if he had been yelling. I listened but the whisky seemed to have seeped from my pores. All at once I was cold stone sober. I was in the room with the woman I'd sworn I would murder. I was out of the dream into reality and I was scared.

"By now you'd have seen the



merchandise. Have you figured out what to do about it?"

"I was making an inventory in my mind. Wipe the glass clean, pick up my handkerchief, clean the door knobs, the telephone, the . . ."

"You there, Cleve?"

"Yeah, I'm here," I said.

"I asked what you intend to do about it?"

"Do? Do? What the hell do you think? I'm getting out. I had nothing to do with it."

"No! Everyone knows what you threatened. You didn't exactly



clean up about your plans, did you, Charlie?"

"Look," I said in a cold sweat. "No-one's got anything on me, I'm clean."

That whispering again. How why didn't she man speak up? I felt deaf with terror, half-mind straining my ears to get every word he said.

"Don't kid yourself, Cleve. You're the only person with a motive, the only person to move any threads and let's face it, Cleve, how long have you been out. Two, three days?"

I took a swig from the bottle, making a mental note to wipe it clean.

"Who are you? What do you want?" I croaked.

"Well now," he said. "That's better. We've come down to the facts at last and you've decided to be sensible. My name is of no importance but in answer to your question of who am I, I may tell you I am the person responsible for the merchandise."

"You ki—"

"Let's say I delivered the goods,

shall we? The goods that you ordered."

"But then I could turn you in."

"Listen, Charlie, come to earth again. Now finally, you do not know who I am and if you reported this going on you would not only be disbelieved, but you would have to explain your presence in the apartment. Even if you did find out who I am there is nothing whatever to connect the merchandise with myself."

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# HIS MONSTROUS

The natives on Pegoso Island were ready to fight off the invaders barehanded — until Captain Jim Poole came up with a weird gimmick that evened up the odds.

FACT • CARL SHERMAN

**JIM POOLE**, skipper-organ of the trading schooner, *Pickie II*, had been napping peacefully in a hammock slung under the midships, awning when he was awakened by the sudden boom of a three-inch gun.

Bumbling across the bow of the *Pickie II* the ship's gunner stepped into the South China Sea and started one of the most fantastic international incidents in modern history.

At the sound of cannon fire, Poole opened his eyes and blinked in the bright sunlight. Observing the convoyed trader *Mosco* standing by to starboard and flying the Chinese National flag, he blinked again.

"What's my gunboat getting ready to board us, boss?"

Kling, the little Malay deckhand was at his side, making sure he was awake.

Poole eyed the small boat lowered from the *Nosara's* square-rigged davis. One man was coiled in the sternports. Two others had begun rowing.

Dropping his weakened foot to the deck and standing erect, Poole towered a full head above Kling. The blond American was in his early 30s, with the lean, flat-bellied body and lit look of a man who spent almost all his time in the open.

At the word his mate, Dave Ritchie, speculatively rubbed his stubbled chin with a misshapen, smoke-battered pipe.

"Now what the hell would one of Chiang Kai-shek's gunboats be doing more than 400 miles south of Formosa?" he asked.

Before answering, Poole reached for the marine glasses dangling by a strap from the bulkhead. He scrutinized the three men curiously. The thought that they might be pirates disguised as Nationalists flashed through his mind, but he discarded it immediately. Chinese pirates rarely if ever sailed this far south of this Bay.

"Regulation blockade," he commented. "Dapper little guy in the



stern is wearing the uniform of a lieutenant. They look to me like the McCoy."

He lapsed into watchful silence and waited. The boat came smartly alongside and the officer scrambled nimbly aboard the *Pickie II*.

The officer was young and courteous and spoke English well. He introduced himself as Lieutenant Min Kuo of the Chinese Nationalist Navy.

"What is your destination, Captain?" he asked.

"The Palawan," Poole answered dully. "Unguan Bay for coals. We're also carrying a lot of mixed cargo for Hapside and Balabac."

Lieutenant Min Kuo glanced briefly over the port rail above the silver-blue swells of the sea. The tiny green tufts of coconut palms indicated the presence of an island.

"That is the Abu. The Spratly Archipelago is far west of your course, isn't it, Captain?"

It was Dave Ritchie, the mate, who bristled angrily at the ques-

tion. He had been doing the navigating.

The mate was redheaded and heavyset. Most of his 40-odd years before signing on the *Pickie II* had been spent as seaman or boson on tramps and freighters from Singapore to Tokyo.

"What the hell business is it of yours, mate?" he challenged belligerently.

Poole gave him a warning look and edged a bit forward. Ritchie had been with him five years. He was a good mate, a competent navigator — and utterly lacking in diplomacy. He was especially sensitive to criticism on his seamanship. A British customs in Marseilles and two Norwegian sailors in Hong Kong had discovered this to their regret when they were carried to the hospital.

"It's this way, Lieutenant," Poole explained soothingly. "We set off from Cernice Shoal when Manila broadcast that typhoon warning the day before yesterday. We wasted the schooner out of the path of the blow."

# SECRET WEAPON



The Chinese nodded politely. "May I please see your cargo manifest, Captain?"

"What the devil for?" Poole snapped.

Lieutenant Min Koo turned his head towards the Nuncio. He solemnly contemplated the Chinese gun mounted in the bow. The Nuncio frowned at the Pacific II as point blank range. There were screams at the gun and ready box.

The significance of these preparations was more impressive than any words. Poole sent King to fetch the manifest.

The Chinese studied the list carefully. 20 cases of canned peaches, one large murre for Saba Fishery, Malabar; 30 rolls aluminum foil, 12 rolls roofing (red), 4 dozen galvanized nails for the Bangs Inter-Island Trading Co.; 100 sticks commercial dynamite and caps for trade.

"About this dynamite, Captain," he said politely. "We must remove it from your schooner, together with any firearms you may have

aboard. You will be given a receipt."

Indignation blazed in Poole's blue eyes. This was an outrage equivalent to an act of piracy by the Chinese Nationalist Government, he pointed out angrily. He would lodge a protest with an American consul at the first opportunity.

Lieutenant Min Koo heard him out patiently and shrugged his shoulders.

"I have no alternative, Captain. Your schooner is within the territorial waters of the Spratly Archipelago claimed by my government. There are many Filipino colonizers, offering active resistance. Our orders are to evict them without bloodshed. You can understand why neither dynamite nor firearms can be permitted to fall into their hands."

In vain Poole argued that this was no affair of his and he had no intention of landing on the Abu or any other of the Spratly islands.

Lieutenant Min Koo was adamant. Standing at the rail, Poole,

Roche and King watched his row back to the junkboat with the dynamite, a 12 gauge shotgun, a 12 Mosberg rifle and two 40 Colt automatic pistols he had taken from the chartroom lockers.

"Stripped clean," Roche growled. "It'll give a month's wages to see the dynamite blow up in their snooty faces."

"That lieutenant forced us into buying caps," Poole agreed grudgingly. "Let's find out what the game's about."

He decided the Palawans could wait. This squatter business was something he wanted to look into. He had not been in the Spratly before and if the Palawans on the island had caps to trade, he was their boy.

He waited several minutes, until the junkboat took off in a northerly direction, before sending King forward to stand bow watch with the sounding line.

Beside him at the wheel the mate studied the island through the plexiglass.

"Fishing village," he announced.





a short, straight Filipino nose in an oval, oval face. Her long black hair, parted by a small shell ornament, hung softly to slim bare shoulders. She wore a single garment, a clinging, flowered sarong.

"I am Maria Sinaga, Captain Poole." She spoke softly and sweetly in Spanish. "My father is Juan Sinaga. He is military commander of Pagasa."

"Pagasa?" There was bewilderment in Poole's voice. "We came into the lagoon of Ito Abu."

"The island is the same, President Clarna renamed it when it became part of Freedomland."

Poole stared toward the open door of the alga and saw no guard. Obviously he was not a prisoner.

"An unfortunate mistake has been made," Maria anticipated his question. "At first my father believed your schooner was coming with the Chinese pirates to attack our island. It wasn't until he examined your log that he learned the truth."

"What about my mate and deck boy?"

"The deck boy remains aboard the schooner in the lagoon. As for Senor Butcher, I am afraid he needed more medical attention than you did. Now if you are ready, I will take you to my father."

"I'd like to see my mate first."

She watched him as he got to his feet. For a moment he swayed and she extended slender arms to help. He waved her off and walked slowly out of the hut.

He stared eagerly toward the shore and drew a deep breath of relief. The *Pinkie II* was there, riding placidly at anchor.

His gaze wandered along the neat line of nipa huts set well back from the beach and focused on a building he hadn't observed before from the sea. Nothing deeply among the palms, it was made of cement blocks. A radio antenna and a flagpole rose several feet above the flat roof.

Poole eyed the fluttering flag curiously: a white saltwater with wings outstretched on a field of red and blue.

"It is the flag of the Republic of Freedomland," Maria explained. "The radio station, post office and customs office are in that building."

Stopping in front of a nipa hut she motioned for him to go inside.

Dave Butcher grunted up at him from a sleeping cot. His head was swathed in bandages, his right arm was in splints. The knuckles of both hands were bandaged and taped.

"This is Luba Cordale, my nurse," he nodded towards the plump and pretty Filipino woman standing by his side. "How do you like that for luck? First time in my life I ever drew a good-looking nurse after getting clattered and both of my hands are tied up."

Smiling at the compliment, the woman turned to Poole.



"One thing I insisted my wife allow me . . . a night out with the boys . . . so here I am!"

"The men called him an idle boy, a red tiger, when they brought him home. Never have they seen one fight so ferociously. Now! If he behaves himself he will be able to leave in about 10 days."

"Ten days!" Poole's face fell. He had been hoping that, standing on and off wheel watches with King, they might continue their voyage to the Palawans on the following days.

In the small office of the cement block building Poole met Juan Sinaga. The military commander had close-cropped, iron-grey hair and worried eyes.

"We greatly regret misunderstanding, Captain Poole," he said apologetically. "The nerves of all of us have been on edge for a long time. We live in the constant shadow of invasion."

"From the Nationalist Chinese," Poole nodded.

"From everyone!" the commander said. "While we are unable

to do anything about this, our orders from President Clarna are to hold Pagasa at all costs—against the whole world if need arise."

The idea of establishing the Republic of Freedomland in the South China Sea belonged to Tomas Clarna, a wealthy, early haired young Filipino industrialist.

A realist and opportunist with dreams far more practical than those of the usual romanticizing, adventurous "empire builders," Tomas Clarna kept an alert eye on the former Japanese-occupied islands following World War II.

His particular interest was the Spratly Archipelago. This included Ito Abu, 24 other mapped islands, and a still unknown number of tiny unmapped islands and atolls lying in the 30,000 square miles of the South China Sea, midway between the Palawans and Philippines to the East and Indo-China to the West.

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# HELL-RAISING FEMALE BANDIT

FACT • BRYAN WILSON

MARIA SANCHEZ was enjoying a busy and profitable night in her bordello-cabaret, known as the *Alcazar de Sonora*, she commanded 15 able, high-breasted, raven-haired Indians, mestizo and Spanish girls. The *Alcazar de Sonora* boasted the youngest, most passionate females along the Embarradero.

That night the place was packed with well-heeled trade—rough, free-spending Spanish seamen, whose ships lay anchored before Vera Cruz.

Maria was secretly out of her teens when she inherited the *Alcazar de Sonora* from her old husband, a retired first mate from a Spanish man-of-war. The man had died prematurely and the rumor was that Maria had buried him along to the grave. Anyway, she learned of men and money at a very early age.

A young mestiza—half Spanish, half Indian—Maria Sanchez was cut for all she could get. She was a witch that any man would want to get his hands on—small firm breasts, long lovely legs, swaying hips.

Now Maria headed for the stairs that led to the private rooms; a couple of her girls were spending too much time with their customers. A bunch of easy sailors grabbed her as she brushed by them wearing her way across the crowded floor. Muscular arms pulled her down. The girl wanted no part of the rough play, but she was not fool enough to resist openly. She tried to hold her temper, waiting for a chance to escape the drunken gang. This night she intended to reserve for the officers who could pay in gold doubloons instead of mere pesos.

As she was pulled around from one man to the next, her hands explored each sailor's loose-fitting dungarees. By the time she completed the circle she had collected half a dozen women's purses crammed with newly minted coins. She hid them in a fold along the hem of her skirt.

Just before she could steal away from the drunken man, one of them staggered to his feet and lunged for her. "My money!" he shouted. "My money, you thiefing witch of hell!" With a murderous look in his eyes he tried to get his hands around Maria's throat, but she ducked and ran off.

More than a hundred men, packed into the cabaret like cattle in a slaughterhouse, went berserk. In the turmoil they slugged each other, knives flashed in the dim light, bodies sagged to the floor, blood flowed.

Maria immediately dropped to the floor. Crawling between the legs of the struggling men, she edged her way toward the street door. She would pause a moment under a table; then, when she saw her next chance, inch to the next table.

Before Maria reached the street, she had collected a skirt full of purses and pouches.

Holding her load gathered up in her skirt, Maria stepped out into the street and made a dash for the narrow alley that separated her so-called cabaret from the building next door. She knew that within moments the mounted police of Vera Cruz would gallop down the Embarradero. They had already threatened her with imprisonment if she was caught stealing from the Royal Navy.

"One moment, *oligante!*" The fat, sweating police magistrate caught her arm just as she was about to dart into the alley. "Where are you running with that heavy burden in your skirt?"

Trying to think up an answer that would keep



off the unwanted attentions of the policeman, she smiled at him and purred her delicately curved lips in a provocative smile. Her eyes looked him up and down, suggesting dark, violent delights. She murmured in a deep, throbbing voice, "I safeguard the profits of my cabaret while these fools make kill each other." With these words Maria slowly backed into the dark alley.

Instead of turning toward the bordello, as she had hoped, the magistrate followed her. "You must let me help you, little one," he said. They were now close together in that narrow space. "You are a



She was lovely, fearless, and born for murder. And when she whipped her gang of outlaws into shape, nobody's life south of the border was safe any more

beautiful child," he muttered as his thick fingers sought to untie her red silk blouse.

Bunching her heavy skirt together she shifted its weight to one hand, and put her free hand around the officer's neck. For a moment her fingers brushed the hair at the back of his neck, gently pressing his face toward hers for a long kiss. Then her hand slowly slid down his back and to his belt.

Maria plunged the long, thin stiletto into his heart just between the shoulder blades.

Maria was now a fugitive from what passed as

justice in 18th-century Spanish America.

The name of Maria Sanchez does not appear in the official records of the colonial government for more than three years after the Yara Cruz incident. Police searched for her in every city in Latin America, but to no avail.

But late in 1745 there was an event near Mexico City that put the name of Maria Sanchez on the lips of every Spaniard in that part of the world.

Ever since the country was first conquered by Hernando Cortes, Mexico suffered under the terror of marauding bandits. In tortuous 400-mile



Van random. Don't you, that this means turning my back on everything I believe in as a ichthyologist?"

supply road from Mexico City to Vera Cruz—the country's lifeline—was the most dangerous highway in America.

One day a carriage bearing the royal seal was found, its horses stampeding, along the road a few miles from Mexico City. A cavalry patrol finally brought the panicked team to a halt. Inside the coach were six strapped, mutilated bodies smacked like cordoned.

On top of the carriage was the driver, half dead. The team had a musket ball in his stomach. The driver lived long enough to tell a story that soon echoed throughout the Spanish empire.

The coach had left Vera Cruz, according to the driver, seven days before. It carried six royal emissaries from the coast of Madrid on the last stage of their journey to Mexico City. One of the passengers was a brother-in-law to the King.

Five days out of Vera Cruz they slowly made their way up the twisting road through the mountains. The carriage and its passengers were protected by an escort of six mounted guards. The were hand-picked, their captain a celebrated soldier recently arrived from Spain.

Suddenly the party was fired upon by muskets all along the road, and the driver and two guards fell beneath the first fusillade. Heavily armed men streamed from behind rocks and trees, surrounding the carriage. The battle was short and furious. The guard captain fought valiantly. His rapier alone accounted for at least a dozen bandits. And each of his men fought to the death.

The battle was all but over. Only one man besides the mortally

wounded coachman was alive. The guard captain, injured and bleeding, still held off a dozen bandits with his rapier, fighting with his back against the carriage.

A shout from somewhere among the readers stopped the butchery.

A slender, athletic figure dressed in a rough shirt and sailor's dungarees, with a red bandana tied successively around his head, jumped across the bodies in the road and pushed aside the man surrounding the captain.

"This one is mine!" the bandit ordered. His voice was deep, and yet there was a soft inflection to it. "He has more guts than a bull!"

The captain's rapier made a sudden lightning arc, and he lunged the point directly toward the face of the unarmed bandit. But his opponent was faster, ducking and jumping out of reach. The rapier point merely caught the red bandana, flicking it off the bandit's head.

The captain was speechless when he saw the long, flowing jet-black hair. With the bandana gone, the hair tumbled down the back of the bandit's head and the captain now confronted a woman—a beautiful woman.

"My patience is at an end," the woman said in her strong, deep voice. "I will now teach this arrogant soldier!" She glanced toward one of her men who tossed his rapier, bandit first.

With a melodramatic flourish of the blade, she said, "Captain, you are facing Maria Sanchez—chief of the streets, daughter of this third industrial jungle, and bride of any man strong enough to take me. Her lungs nearly choked the captain's throat.

"At your pleasure, seiorita," The captain bowed imperceptibly. "And I am Captain Carlos Chavez-Garcia, of His Majesty's guard. It



"I never read, but I'd like to meet a cute novelist with an idea and like a couple of chapters!"

would also appear," he looked at the men surrounding him, "that I do not have much time to live."

They faced each at all certain of the outcome, in spite of his superior strength, Maria Sanchez held as steadily a rapier as any man he had ever fought.

"Kash!" the dark-haired girl finally muttered. She deftly thrust her rapier blade against his. Her point made a small circle around the hilt of his weapon, and then—touché! She drove the thin silver or steel through the muscles of the captain's shoulder.

Carlos' face twisted with pain and his weapon dropped to the ground. Maria withdrew her blade and held it poised at his throat. The captain stared at her calmly, his eyes asking no mercy.

Maria wiped a moment, then moved her blade aside. Without speaking, she turned and walked off through the crowd of bandits.

Thus was the story told by the dying coachman. By the end of the day, everyone in Mexico City talked of the female bandit Maria Sanchez.

Carlos, now a prisoner, was taken to Maria's small primitive mountain camp. For days he lay in a fever, nursed by some camp women, but weeks passed before his strength returned.

Carlos was able to observe what went on in the camp even though Maria's tent was out of sight at the far end of the area. In the mornings she would ride into the mountains on a huge chestnut stallion at the head of 50 of her men. Days, maybe a week later, they returned—horses loaded with bags full of gold, silver or other treasures.

On the night of their return they always divided the spoils. There would invariably follow an incredible celebration.

Maria usually did not appear in all the revelry reached its peak. Then she would stride, hips swinging seductively, into the circle of light.

Standing with her head thrown back, her fingers clasped behind her neck, she cried out, "Who is man enough!"

A swaggering bearded bandit would grab her in his arms and carry her off to her tent.

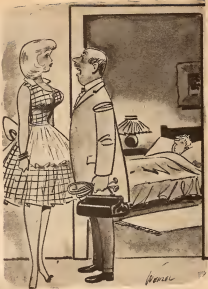
During one of these crazed fiestas—Carlos had now been a prisoner for over a month—he stood inside the door of his tent, watching Maria cruelly waving a whip over a hapless victim. But this time Maria walked to her tent alone.

Suddenly Carlos noticed two of her men get up and start in the direction of his prison tent. They spoke softly with the guards outside his door, and then entered.

"Our guest will finally earn his keep!" one of them said confidently to Carlos. "You will come with us."

Carlos followed. He suspected where he would spend the night—if he survived.

Maria stood waiting for him, her narrowed eyes measuring him. Carlos stared at her slim body, her lovely face, at the whole scene



"He needs a good rest . . . why don't you shut your mother for a week?"

ing beauty of her. But her eyes had the meretricious glint of a professional madonnas who enjoyed her trade.

"Well, my brave Captain, I hope they have taken good care of you." Her voice was soft, tantalizing. She stood before him, only inches away. "Can you handle a woman as delicately as a rapier?"

Carlos' will power crumbled. They stayed together all through the rest of the night and into the next day.

With Carlos at her side, Maria undertook more profitable raids. Though Carlos became her second-in-command, by death duels with half a dozen of Maria's former lovers, she never permitted her orders to be questioned by anyone. However, for a while at least, Maria was a changed woman—a one man woman.

Carlos enforced military discipline among the bandits. He built the mountain hideout into a

stronghold that could withstand any assault. And Carlos organized an intelligence system throughout the colony, whose informers told them wherever a worthwhile prize was at hand. The spies also served to recruit new men for the bandit army. It grew to 300 mounted, heavily armed desperados.

The outlaws expanded their activity. Instead of being satisfied with current loot, they sacked entire villages and small cities. Nothing outside the walled capital of Mexico City itself was entirely safe.

But Maria Sanchez was no ordinary criminal. She seemed to have an intuitive ability to play armed chess with the Spanish soldiers. In the beginning, she was only one of a dozen bandit leaders in the mountains south of Mexico City. But after her fame spread and she acquired the brilliant

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# "HONEY, I FORGOT TO DUCK!"

This quote from America's famous "Champ", Jack Dempsey, sets the scene for a saga of the unusual in boxing. One single factor can place a fight in the historical niche labelled, "Unusual".



John L. Sullivan has gone into history as a legend. In one of his unique fights there were two referees. In another, he quit after six rounds — and won on points!

I SAT through the fight with my clothes soaked. In spite of an army raincoat I had borrowed, the water flowed down my body, yet I enjoyed the affair more than any I had ever witnessed. When the fight was over, before we were able to get to the military car that had been assigned to me, we waded almost knee-deep through a sea of mud for half a mile, and when we got to the Resident Pal ace, my suit had shrunk to such an extent that my valet found it necessary to stir the trousers to remove them. I couldn't use my shoes and coat again."

Nag Fleischer, editor of the *BING* magazine, wrote the above in his book, *50 YEARS AT RING SIDE*. The fight in question featured Australia's Jimmy Carruthers and Tom Channon Song Kitrat. Jimmy defended his world bantam title in this scrap, which Fleischer labelled, "The Battle Of The Typhoon."

It was a fantastic fight. Carruthers could have had it postponed because of the weather and because he was ill, but he said, "Let's get it over."

For three days the rain poured as if on only in the tropics. And for three days Jimmy Carruthers could not keep food on his stomach.

Despite the weather, 50,000 fans paid to see the fight. They went to the scene of action by foot, bicycle, horseback, car, train and wagon.

The ring was like a lake with water inches deep. The boxes fought in bare feet. They slid around the ring at times and on one occasion Carruthers fell flat on his face. Bulbs from the overhead lights exploded and Jim cut his foot badly in one round.

Carruthers was seconded by Bill McConnell (his trainer), Mrs McConnell and Jim's wife, Myra. The ladies held umbrellas over their heads and over Jim's when he returned to his corner at the end of each round.

Carruthers, a speedy boxer, was handicapped more than Song Kitrat who normally was slower moving and a puncher. Jim was ill, as stated, yet he won the fight on points.

The bout was very close, and naturally, the partisan crowd booted, but the sporting honey grabbed a microphone and addressed the crowd:

"My dear friends, I am proud

to have been able to bring fame to my country by being the first Thai boxer to contend for the world welterweight championship and I am personally satisfied that the decision was fair and beyond doubt. I am not sorry, my friends and countrymen, why are you?"

Thunderous applause greeted Songkratri's remarks.

The Corvath-Songkratri fight, held in Bangkok on May 2, 1954, was one of the many in the history of the ring that was unusual.

Sometimes weather conditions have made fights unusual; sometimes there have been unusual knockouts, unusual KO positions, odd circumstances. Sometimes a fight or a fighter has gone down in history because of a remark that was made. One single factor — or many — can turn an ordinary fight into one that goes into the historical niche labeled, "Unusual."

Early in 1957, George Barnes, then the Empire and Australian welterweight champion, went to Thailand for two fights. In his first in that country, he met Samart Soerachuang. The result was a draw. In his second, George was pitted against Sorndee Yongtrakul.

Yongtrakul was an idol in Thailand. A terrific puncher, he was called, "The Man With The Thunder In His Fists." He was a better fighter than Soerachuang and whenever Barnes walked the streets after his first fight in Thailand he was accosted by locals who shook their heads and said how sorry they were that George — "such a nice man" — had to die, as surely he would when he met Yongtrakul.

One night an undertaker came to George's hotel and asked George if he might have the Australian's business after the Yongtrakul fight.

But Yongtrakul's punch didn't worry Iron Man Barnes at all. George's punch, however, worried Yongtrakul. In the ninth round George dropped Yongtrakul. The Thai fighter beat the count but he held up his arms in defeat. He quit.

Then things began to fly. First came the abuse, then cushions. These were followed by bottles — full ones! A fat Thai jumped into the ring and walked to Barnes in a threatening manner.

"I didn't want to hit him," George told me. "But I couldn't let him hit me. So I shaped up to him, danced around him and laughed. He gave it away."

But Barnes wasn't feeling like laughter. He was worried about his wife, Betty, who was at ringside. George cautioned for someone to take care of Betty until he could have the TBE.

Then George discovered that the crowd wasn't annoyed with him — they were annoyed with Yongtrakul for quitting!

Colonel Kri, the promoter, jumped into the ring to restore order but someone had been out with a bottle! Police and soldiers re-



On November 21, 1953, Mike McDonald met Mike Khannoo at Broken Hill. McDonald hit Khannoo with a left — and flattened a few grasshoppers! The blancher on the fighter's back and on the ring apron — you guessed it — more grasshoppers!

stored order and George finally reached his dressing room. But Betty wasn't there. A frantic search found Betty — she had been put into Yongtrakul's dressing room!

We go back over 50 years and shift the scene to America. Jimmy Britt, a claimant to the world lightweight title, came to a tough opponent one night. The man in question was Charlie Sager, a real iron man. No fighter could put Sager on the floor.

In the early rounds it was all Britt, with his superior boxing. But he began to tire and the tough Sager gradually assumed command. By the 15th round Sager had taken up the slack and seemed assured of victory. Britt's backers became anxious.

Came the 20th — and last — round. Sager came out of his corner fast, swarmed over Britt and it became obvious that Jimmy could not last the round.

Then someone switched out all the lights.

It took only a matter of seconds to switch on the lights and then all in the hall beheld an unusual sight — Sager, on the floor, unconscious. Someone had hit him on the head with a blackjack and had laid him out like a carpet!

Britt was very popular in his home town and he received 2000 dollars for his first fight — something of a record, particularly in 1903. He collected 3000 dollars for his second fight and 4000 dollars for his third. His biggest purse was 17,500 dollars — for beating Young Corbett. In his career he earned 180,000 dollars and he kept most of it.

One time Britt felt slightly run down so he visited a doctor for a check. The doctor didn't know Britt and after a brief examination, he said to the fighter, "What you need is exercise."

"But my business . . ." began Britt.

"Never mind your business," replied the doc. "You can take care of itself. You need lots of



*Sugar Ray Robinson met Dutchman Jim Brann in Detroit. Brann left the ring in the eighth round, claiming "I don't mind being knocked out — but I don't like being humiliated!"*



course. Go to a gymnasium. Play handball. Punch the bag — anything, so long as it is strenuous."

Brinn looked at him calmly and answered: "I am Jimmy Brinn, the fighter."

The doctor did a swift double-take. "What you need, my boy, is a good rest. Stop exercising for a couple of weeks."

John L. Sullivan has gone into history as a legend. But most of the stories we hear about him today concern his challenge to "Lack every man in the house" and of his only defeat — at the hands of Jim Corbett. But there was one incident in connection with Sullivan, which was unique. It concerned his first fight with Paddy Ryan, in 1882.

Ryan was recognized as the world bare knuckle champion and he had the most unusual record of all time — he had only one victory that anyone could trace!

The unique part of the Sullivan-Ryan fight? Every corner in the ring was occupied — there were two referees!

Sullivan wanted to name the referee; Ryan, as champion, demanded the right to nominate the third man in the ring. There was a deadlock so someone suggested there be two referees. But the two "third men" — Alex Brewster and Jack Hardy — were not needed as Sullivan won by knockout in the ninth round.

In the days of Sullivan — and for some years afterwards — champions could get away with anything short of murder. Sullivan figured in one case of bare-faced robbery, as regards a verdict. His opponent was Dominick McCaffery (you can't get a name more Irish than that), and the two met on August 28, 1885, in Cincinnati.

Sullivan injured his arm in the fight and he called the referee to his corner at the end of the sixth round and told him: "My arm is busted. I'll fight no more tonight."

Of course, the correct decision in such a circumstance, is a KO win for the man still eager to fight — in this case, McCaffery. But referee Billy Wells refused to give a verdict that night. Two days later he sent along his decision: "Sullivan is the winner on points." And that is how it appears in the record books.

The fans didn't make much complaint because Sullivan was a gol to them. For instance, when Paul Ryan defended his world heavyweight bare knuckle title against Jake Kilman in 1882 (Sullivan won in 15 rounds, one of John L.'s seconds threw his hat into the ring and a fan grabbed it and sold it for 10 dollars — as a souvenir!

Some of the effects of that fight

*During the McDonald - Kilman fight at Broken Hill the grasshoppers were so thick that one of the promoters had to enter the ring between rounds to sweep the insects off the floor. Here, Ray Campbell does the honors.*





the winner to be regarded as world champion. Hart won and Jeffries accompanied him as champion. But historians do not regard Hart as a world title-holder, and rightly so.

But one fighter who received a world title without winning it in the ring is listed as a world champion in all record books: He was Finny Mitchell.

In 1922 it was decided to install a man as world junior welterweight champion. Instead of watching the two leading contenders or conducting a tournament, a vote was taken. Mitchell received the most votes and he remains the only boxer in history to be recognized as a world champion without fighting for the right to it.

There has been plenty of drama in boxing at Broken Hill, NSW, and some of it has been highly unusual. One night early in the century, Tim Murphy met Jim Hiscott in a bout billed for 20 rounds. When the final bell rang the referee couldn't decide who was the winner so he ordered the fighters to box another two rounds.

In 1903 Hiscott fought Jack McGowan. Before the first bell, Hiscott walked to the centre of the ring and addressed the crowd. He told the fans how many fights he had had and how many he had won, then added: "Win, lose or draw tonight, I won't fight again! I don't want any remarks from the crowd here, complimentary or otherwise."

Sometimes fighters are carried from the ring after fights, but at Broken Hill a fighter was carried into the ring!

Vince Blake defended his Australian flyweight title at Broken Hill in December, 1964, against Frankie Bennett. The stadium was booked out a week before, which was just as well for the promoters and the fighters, as Broken Hill had a terrific storm on the day and night of the bout. The stadium consisted of four walls and no roof and the ring was a lake.

As with Carruthers and Songkhrat, Bennett and Blake fought in bare feet. But to save Frankie's feet from the gravel on the path leading from the dressing room to the ring, Bennett's manager, Andy Whittall, carried his fighter on his back to the blemish square. Bennett won the fight on points.

On September 28, 1953 African flyweight Kid Dynamite met Australian Teddy Fitzgerald at Broken Hill — and ran into a dust-storm. Fitzgerald was white when he entered the ring but after a few rounds he was red with dust. When the storm was at its height, even the seconds could barely see the fighters. Dynamite stayed close to Fitzgerald and stopped him in the sixth round.

On November 20, 1954, Alan Cartwright met Teddy McCoy at Broken Hill — and struck a plague of moths. The moths gathered in their thousands on the arc lights

above the ring and the fighters appeared as shadows even to ring-aiders.

But probably the worst plague at a fight at Broken Hill was one of grasshoppers. That was on November 21, 1923. Mickey McDonald met Mike Rhames in the main fight and so thick were the grasshoppers that one of the promoters had to enter the ring between rounds to sweep the insects off the floor.

Over 40 years ago Pat Gleason ruled as lightweight champion of NSW. One night in 1917, Pat stepped into the ring at Lithgow (NSW) to fight 20 rounds. The railway strike was on and money was short among the miners and other workers of Lithgow, with the result few fans attended the fight.

As Pat and his opponent were fighting for a percentage of the "house", Pat did not appreciate fighting 20 rounds for "peanuts", as he addressed the crowd.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I take it you all are good uncovers?"

"Yes," shouted the fans.

"And," continued Pat, "you believe in a fair day's pay for a fair day's work?"

"Yes!" roared the fans.

"Well," said Pat, "I have been billed to fight 20 rounds tonight. Now you can see, if you look around you, that the crowd is so small that if anyone fired a gun, he wouldn't hit anybody. Therefore, I don't feel like fighting 20 rounds for the money I'll get."

"If you want 20 rounds, I'll give you 20 rounds, but I'm afraid you won't see a good fight."

"But if you want 10 good rounds of fighting, I'll give you 10 rounds. Now, what do you want?"

"Give us 10 good rounds," the fans called. So Pat and his opponent fought a 10-round fight! Pat won on points.

There always have been men who like gatecrash fights—if they can. Jimmy Johnson, one-time promoter, thought up a novel way to beat gatecrashers which he was promoting small-time shows. He stood outside one door and all persons who wanted free tickets were directed to him. As each hopeful came up to Johnson, Jimmy smiled, said, "Here, go through this door," then opened the door. Beyond the door was a passageway, at the end of which was another door. As each hopeful walked through the far door, he found himself out in the street! There he joined the ever-increasing throng of other hopefuls to hush at the next one coming through the door.

The most popular fighter ever to enter the ring undoubtedly was Jack Dempsey, but Jack wasn't all ways popular. In fact, when he was champion, there was a majority who wanted to see him beaten. One reason was that he had to face a "slacker" charge during World War I.

Then, came 1936 and Jack lost his title to Gene Tunney and from this defeat came a love for Demp-

sey, a love which has grown with the years so that Dempsey still is known as "The Champ."

What brought about this change of heart by the fight fans of America? Just five words — five words uttered by Dempsey to his wife in front of witnesses, after he lost his title.

When Mrs Dempsey asked Jack why he lost, Dempsey grunted, "Honey, I forgot to duck!"

Some years later came Joe Louis, perhaps the greatest of all world heavyweights. Joe, a negro, who made few statements and who thought carefully before he said a word, made two statements which made headlines.

One concerned the toughest fight of all time — World War II. At a rally, Louis was asked to address the multitude. He said simply: "We must win because we are on God's side."

Whether Joe meant the usual, "God is on our side," or whether he intentionally worked the phrase the way he did, no one knows for sure, but his statement did make an impact.

The other Louisville was made to a newspaper reporter. It was in 1943. Joe had served in the Army. So had Billy Conn, who had fought Joe a great fight for 13 rounds in 1941. Promoter Mike Jacobs matched Louis and Conn in a return bout in 1946 and the fight grossed nearly two million dollars.

Speculation as to the winner was rife. Conn had held a points lead over Louis for 13 rounds in their first fight. Billy was a fast-moving brilliant boxer but he had become ambitious and had tried to KO Joe in the 13th round. The fight ended in that round but it was Joe Louis who was standing at the finish.

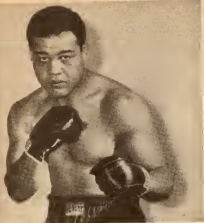
The years of comparative idleness had slowed Louis more than they had slowed Conn, thus a number of fans thought that Conn would out-speed Joe and win the return fight.

A newspaper reporter watched Conn in training for the return fight and he was impressed. Then he went to Louis' training camp and he was not so impressed with Joe. After the workout, the reporter said to Louis, "Conn is in good shape, Joe — better shape than you are. And he has a plan to beat you by running you off your legs. He will box you on the backbones; he will run away from you 10 rounds, if necessary, and you are too tired to chase him."

Louis slowly wiped the sweat off his face before replying. Then he said "He can run, but he can't hide."

The result of the fight? Louis knocked out Conn in the eighth round.

Ray Treasure and Frank Flannery were two crowd-pleasing Australian lightweights who appeared after the end of World War II. Frank won the Australian lightweight title; Ray didn't win



*Joe Louis was perhaps the greatest of all world heavyweights. A man of few words, the Brown Bomber made two famous statements to the press. His more famous one was aimed at Billy Conn — "We can run, but he can't hit."*

any titles but he was a leading contender.

One night at Sydney Stadium, Treasure staged his usual good fight as winning prize an importation. Radio fight-caller Eric Walker hopped into the ring as soon as the decision was given, to interview Ray who was breathing hard.

"Congratulations, Ray," said Eric. "It was a great fight."

"My word it was," panted Ray. "I'd have loved to have seen it."

Flannery won his title in 1932. He lost it to Pat Ford in 1933. Both fights were punishing and in the Ford fight Frank took a beating, to be stopped in the 10th round in his dressing room after the fight Flannery was asked by a boxing writer: "Frank, do you want to fight Ford again?"

Flannery paused in his punching. "What?" he almost shouted. "Fight Ford again?" If I fought him again I'd finish up drawing ducks in the wall and throwing breadcrumbs to them!"

Australian welterweight Leo Brennan was a good fighter — much better than his record shows. Leo could punch like a male lark and he could take it, but if he had an opponent, he took it easy. Leo was self-satisfied and this last fight he should have won.

He cooperated his trainer, Billy

Lawrence, and one night at Sydney Stadium, Bill was at his wife and Brennan was fighting the main fight against Pat Farrell. For round after round Farrell pumpeled Brennan Lawrence, at the end of each round, implored Brennan to "do something." At the end of the sixth round, Brennan replied: "Bill, he's such a nice fellow. I don't want to hurt him."

By the end of the eighth round Lawrence had reached the end of his tether. "Leo," he said, "if you don't knock out this fellow in the next round, I won't be here when you get back."

Leo looked at him in amazement. "Do you mean that, Bill?" "My word I mean it."

In the ninth round Leo Brennan walked out to the centre of the ring and knocked out Farrell!

Another night Brennan met hard-punching Bill Lattigo at Sydney Stadium. It was a hard fight and in the seventh round the two punchers stood toe to toe for the full three minutes and both belted each other. When the bell ended the round, two weary and battered boys gladly took their one-minute rest in their respective corners.

Ten seconds before the eighth round started, Brennan uttered his first words of the fight. He turned his head and said to Billy

Lawrence: "Bill, if I'm not back in three minutes, you'd better come looking for me!" Leo won the fight on points.

A sense of humor is a great asset, but it wasn't a sense of humor which prompted a remark by a famous fighter last year. I refereed at Washington, D.C. Scandone met Doug King in the main event. King was a brilliant boxer with a solid punch. King also could punch but he wasn't as Scandone's class as a boxer and he knew it. He was plainly frightened but he stayed in the ring until the sixth round. Then Scandone landed a beautiful left hook that stretched King full length on the canvas.

I leaned over King and began counting. During the count I asked him how he was. "I'm OK," replied King, "but I'm not getting up. This blows into me hard!" And he stayed down until I counted him out!

The brother of a former Australian champion showed signs of developing into a good fighter. I can vouch for the truth of the incident because I was present and I heard the remark made by the fighter.

This fighter had won seven bouts without defeat. He could punch and he fought in a fast aggressive manner. One the night in question he was in the ring in a country town opposed to a local fighter who also was setting up a fine record.

A lot of publicity had been given to the fight and the trouble was both boys read the publicity. When the first bell rang they left their corners very reluctantly. When one threw a punch the other jumped back in a hurry. There wasn't a blow landed in the round.

The bell ended the round and both returned to their corners. The visiting boxer, the champion's brother, turned to his manager and said: "Take off my gloves. I'm quitting. This fellow hits too hard."

"What?" shouted the manager. "He hasn't hit you yet!"

"I know that," replied the fighter, "but he might!"

And he never fought again.

The last story concerns a fighter having his first fight. Bill McConnell trained the kid and had him matched in a four-round preliminary at Sydney Stadium. The kid turned on a great fight but it was a hard one in which both boxers took a lot of punishment. Then, in the fourth round, McConnell's fighter knocked out his opponent. Happily he returned to his corner where he was crowned the winner. His opponent still lay on the canvas.

McConnell said to his boy: "Good fight son, but go over and help the other kid to his feet."

The winner looked at McConnell in amazement. "My McConnell," he said, "you want me to help him up? I just spent four rounds knocking him down!"

It's a great sport, boxing, with drama, pathos, humor — and plenty of unusual incidents.



# NEVER OUT OF DATE . .

Black net stockings were the rage  
in days gone by.  
And still today,  
the very mention of them  
conjures up in a man's mind  
an exciting picture of a lovely girl.  
The associational value  
is still as strong as ever.  
For what better medium can be used  
to cover yet disclose  
a perfect pair of legs . . . ?



# buffalo kill

Ken Richards was not afraid of Harding. He just didn't know what to do. They were together to shoot buffaloes—but many a bullet can go astray . . .

**R**ICHARDS stood in the shelter of the paperbarks and watch Harding driving his horse in the clearing. It was a strange feeling to have an enemy under your gun but to have no intention of pulling the trigger—an odd, empty feeling. Harding, Richards knew, would never experience it. Harding meant to kill him—at the very first opportunity.

Richards had the rifle aside and reached for his canteen. He

wished he had filled it with rum instead of water, but Paula had been watching.

The native boys were moving into the clearing then, approaching the fallen beasts with knives already bared and oblivious of the creaking and thundering beyond the trees as the remainder of the buffaloes escaped. The shooters, too, were leaving their places in the trees, Yorke and Kate Yorke and Paula going directly towards

the peeps while Simpson and his fat wife alternately posed and photographed each other beside a fallen buffalo. Richards wondered how the hell they knew which one it was they had shot, during the actual shoot the clearing had been a confusion of fleeing beasts and reverberating rifle shots and senseless animal dying.

It was a great sport Richards told himself. Hell and damnation yes! Hide behind a tree and wait



for Harding and the aborigines to chase the buffalo up to you. Great stuff. Personally he'd take credit for shooting any time.

The Yockes and Paula had almost reached the trees where the pups were hidden. Paula cut a new figure in her slacks and checked skirt against the older couple. He remembered the way Harding had appraised her and felt a flash of anger. But of course she meant nothing to Harding. It was just another way of needing him. Richards, another sweet drop of revenge.

Slung the rifle across his shoulder Richards picked up his camera and moved towards the boys skinning and de-horning the dead buffalo. He walked slowly feeling the weight of his body on the unaccustomed high-heeled riding-boots. He was a solid man, fair skinned and sandy haired. The sun had tanned the skin of his beaked nose in burning pools and now beaded his face and stuck his shirt to his back with perspiration.

Harding wheeled his horse and cantered to meet him. A real bushman Harding. A northern

bushman, tall and lean and sure. He wore khaki trousers and shirt and sat the horse as though he had been cinched on with the saddle. His long sun-browned face was as smooth and composed as water-smoothed rock as he looked down at Richards.

"You shoot anything?" He smiled at Richards as though they had some sort of joke going.

Richards said, "Only with a camera, Brock. Got a good shot when the herd broke through the trees." He smiled back at Harding but made his left dull and aching — like an empty petrol drum. He could not help wondering when Harding would make his try.

Harding dismounted and leading the horse walked with him towards the skinnery. He was taller than Richards but not so thick in the shoulders and chest. Also away from the horse you could see the beginning of a paunch. A guide had it softer than a stockman. Richards guessed.

Harding's voice was flat and still in the dry air as he said, "I often wondered what would happen when we met again, Ken. I

thought I'd start by knocking your teeth out — but instead here we are playing about like old mates from the army." He laughed and in the same dead voice continued, "You were a fool to come up here, Ken. Didn't you know this is where I come from. Didn't you think I'd be waiting, praying for a chance like this?"

"I know you worked up here somewhere," Richards said. "For the real work, Ken's a long time ago. Brock. A long useless time."

"Not for me," Harding said viciously. "For me Ken's as right here and right now. Because that boy it's all the chance I'm giving away."

He swung up into the saddle and in almost the same instant Richards heard one of the skinnery cry out in a thin frightened voice. He turned to the sound and saw that the boys had all stopped working and were looking beyond the two white men back across the clearing. He followed their gaze and his heart gave a sickening little jerk.

A buffalo was advancing into the clearing in short angry rushes. It was no more than 20 yards from him. Blood gushed from its side every time its legs panged it forward and blood and fatty leather wetted its nostrils. It carried its head high as though searching for a target to ease its pain and rage. Without thinking, Richards slung the camera strap over his shoulder and brought the gun free into his hands. He wondered how the bull Harding could have missed the wounded bull and let it get behind them in the trees. For a moment he thought it might have been deliberate but already Harding had wheeled his horse and was cantering in a short hard circle to come down on the beast.

The bull had seen Richards and the skinnery now and halted, head thrown back, the huge back curving horns black and dull in the morning sun. The head lowered to charge and Harding put his horse to the gallop.

It seemed suddenly very still in the clearing. Richards had the rifle up, legs braced. He sensed that the boys had fanned out behind him, ready to run if Harding missed the bull. He watched the charging buffalo, black and deadly against the back-drap of green trees and sun yellowed rice-grass.

Harding closed swiftly with the buffalo. When he came up on the tail of the wounded bull, he leant out with his rifle in one hand, the nozzle almost touching the rump and fired into the base of the spine.

The bull sank slowly, arrested in full flight as the hindquarters were paralyzed. Harding's horse had side-stopped with the shot to avoid the horse as the bull toppled and now Harding pulled around in front of the fallen beast and shot it again in the head. It collapsed completely then. It made no sound. The buffalo has noellow.





"Don't you dare turn your back when I'm talking to you!"

Richards wiped the sweat from his face. It had been a fine exhibition of horsemanship and shooting. He thought it was a pity that they couldn't shoot like that—the way of the professional bull-fight shooter. But, of course, you could hardly expect women and city dwellers to do that kind of thing.

Harding centered past and glanced down at him. Richards withdrew him go thoughtfully. Harding he knew was right. He should never have come on the trip—not when there was a chance of meeting the other man. He wished Yerke had fired a different guide. He'd had his fill of killing in Korea and wanted no more of it.

The bottle rattled slightly against the tin panaken as Richards poured the rum.

"Sure you won't have one, Paula? Keep the chill out of your bones."

She did not answer. She stood with one leg against the plank table, watching him steadily, thoughtfully, as though she might pierce the wall the rum was building between them and see what was bothering him.

Her shirt hung loosely outside her shorts, buttoned only in the middle so that the buttons stared open across the smooth breast above the shorts and the top exposed the curves of her breasts and the beginning whiteness of her bra. The black hair was damp from the bush shower, curling tight and short above her gray eyes and olive skin. She had beautiful skin Richards thought, and wanted to tell she would put her eyes somewhere else.

She said softly, "What is it, Ken?" And when he did not respond, pushed at him gently. "It's Harding, isn't it? You know him before . . . maybe in the army?"

Richards drank some more rum

and sat looking into the panaken. The camp was pitched under a great milk wood and he could hear the murmuring of the tree and further away the dry whistlings of the paperbirds.

"I saw the way he looked at you when we came," Paula said. "Like a cat that suddenly spots a canary—all alone and ready to be pounced on. And he watches you all the time . . . He greets me the crooks watching and hating you. Please, Ken. Tell me."

Richards drew a deep breath. "It's nothing. Come on, relax. We're supposed to be on a holiday. You're just letting your imagination run away with you."

"I don't think so. You're — he's running some kind of bluff on you and it's got you rattled."

He reached for the bottle, keeping his eyes away from her face. "I don't know what you're talking about, Paula."

"You do." Her voice was urgent with pleading as she leant towards him, her body streaming at the shirt. He wanted to pull her into his arms but instead he began to pour the rum. Paula continued, "You do, Ken. You're scared and I want to know what it. I want to help you. There must be a reason why he makes you so scared."

Richards was silent. There was a reason all right but he wasn't going to talk about—not even to Paula. Because to talk you had to remember and he wasn't going to do that. Not the sinking mass of Korean war or the stinking mass of the Harding brothers. The rim of the panaken was damply metallic against his lips as he drank. He reached for the bottle again but she jumped forward and snatched it away.

He smiled crookedly and held the panaken for her to pour. She shook her head.

"I'm not scared," Richards said. "Just having myself a little party."

"You've been having a party for days, Ken. Now I want to know why."

"Because I'm a happy man. You going to pour me a drink or not?"

"I'll pour all right." She was flushed with anger, sitting by his glowing panaken. She unlocked the bottle and opened it. The rich liquid splashed heavily into the dusty ground and the flames rose warmly, tantalizingly, before Richards.

Paula slammed the bottle on the table. "There! If you want to hide in a bottle at least you've got an empty one."

She wheeled and pushed away past the flap of the tent.

Richards put the panaken beside the bottle and sat staring at the table top. He thought it was a silly thing for Paula to have done. He had more than one bottle, still perhaps he should have told her. Or tried to. Because in the long run he would have to remember — Harding wouldn't let him forget.

And it was true. He was not afraid of Harding. At least no more afraid than a man would be



looking into a rifle barrel. It was just that he didn't know what to do. One Harding on his conscience was enough. He could try to run of course but he knew with grim certainty that Brock would dangle him soon that cowardly grace.

He thought of getting another bottle but did not move. He thought a little about Harding and about Harding's brother, Jimmy. Jimmy James Harding, killed by Communist machine-gun fire in a rice field outside Kangnung, Korea. Or had he died because of fear? The fear of Sergeant Kim Richards.

Brock Harding had first posed the question and with it given the doubts that dogged Richards all answer. He picked up the empty perfume and looking at the brown drops on the bottom of it asked himself the question yet again. Had he really been so despicable, so afraid of that machine-gun that he had ordered a man to do the impossible thing of stepping it while he lay safely in the rear? There was no answer in the perfume. Was it? If he had, then how could he kill that man's brother? Even in self-defence.

He went to his pack and rum maged out another bottle of rum. Then he sat down at the table and with a steady hand poured until the perfume was half-full.

They went out late the next afternoon. The full party. The buffalo came out on the grassy flats to feed after the heat of the



*"Boy! I live for the day when they invent a car that can exceed the speed of sound!"*

day. Harding had the hunters hidden on a flat top truck at the screening shelter of a jagged line of paperbarks where the buffaloes would seek to escape the pursuing horsemen.

The Simpsons and Yarkes were in holiday mood and had needed Richards for his gloom. Paula had laughed with them, then sobered as she turned to watch Harding ride away. Richards had witnessed the hunter for a time but eventually it got on his nerves and he left the truck. Paula had

watched him but made no move to interfere.

Now Richards was alone in his shelter, commanded where the plains made a small half-moon of clearing on the edge of the track. The truck was 30 or 40 yards away on the other side of the trees. It was a good spot from which to shoot. The beasts would run right past him.

He could see buffaloes out in the rice grass, some almost concealed in the dry stalks, looking quietly. Then the yellow of the aubergines came to him and the thundering of their hooves and the buffalo came to life. Brock hammered the ground, black hoofs and backs heaving above the yellow and green grass. There were 25 or 30 buffaloes and they came straight for the trees.

Richards raised his camera for a shot of the charging herd then hooked the strap to a tree and settled with his rifle. He welcomed the thought of action — there would be no time then to think of Harding.

He downed a bull that came straight towards him with a beautiful aim, shot in the centre of and a little above the eyes, just below the horn ridge so that the bullet went directly into the brain. He was so intent on the shot that the second bull almost trampled him. It was running to the left of the first buffalo and he was unaware of danger until the beast crashed into the bushes. He stopped a shot and called away.

He came to his feet and knew that the snap shot had been a mistake. He had wounded the bull and now enraged it had wheeled within the first line of the trees. It had leaped to charge and Richards ran, dodging between the thin paperbarks as he sought a tree the solid for the bull to crash over. And he became aware then of another mistake. All the trees were spruce; he should have made sure he had a fank hole when he stationed himself.



*"You can easily spot the single ones . . . they annoy you by staying that way!"*

*(Continued on page 43)*



# underworld EXECUTION

FACT • DICK HALVORSEN

He looked like a choir boy, but he was more sadistic than the meanest drunk alive. He broke all the mob's rules—until he went down as the most brutal killer of his time.

THE moment he saw the couple coming around the corner, he knew the trap had worked. The girl was Mary Salmer, and the man with her head to be Carmine Barilli, because Mary had sworn she wouldn't let anyone else take her home.

"That's them now," Vince Coll muttered to his topcoats, Patino del Greco and Frankie Giordano. The three of them sat in a darkened car. "She's a swell kid," Vince said. "I knew she could do it."

He didn't have to tell his topcoats what to do next. Frank sat ready as the wheel as Vince got out quietly. Patino meticulously unlatched the rear door of the sedan and followed Vince casually down the street.

"Hi, Vince," Mary laughed as they approached. "See? I fixed it up with Carmine. Everything's okay and he wants to talk."

Vince didn't waste any words. He pulled his gun out and started firing.

"To get me wrong, kid, I want square things—" was as far as the terrified Barilli got before he slumped to the sidewalk, dead.

"Thanks, kid, you done me a big favor," Vince told the girl. Mary stood transfixed, horrified at the outcome of her promise to Vince to arrange a party with Carmine, her gangster boy friend, so they could patch things up. Slowly Vince swung the gun toward her. He fired once and the girl fell dead.

"Never leave any witnesses around, Patino," he said. The two men hopped in the car and Frankie took off.

Vincent Coll had spent most of his on the run, getting from one lousy spot into another. He was born in County Kildare, Ireland, in 1908, and he'd just turned four when his parents died and relatives shipped him to America with his brother Peter and sister Florence, to live with an aunt who'd volunteered to take care of them.

Their new home was a railroad flat on 25th Street near 11th Avenue, Manhattan, in the neighborhood known as Hell's Kitchen. Vince soon learned that running was a matter of survival.

Hit-and-run — that was the only safe way to operate. Vince found out. He had things rougher than most of the kids because he was so pretty. He had strawberry-blond hair, blue eyes, and cherubic lips. When grownups looked at him they thought of angels and altar boys, and said so. What the other kids and left him with a beef against the world that never let up.

In that era and in that neighborhood every kid had a nickname that was picturesque and colorful. All the Irish boys were "Shanty" or "Mick" — except Coll, and he would have traded nicknames with anyone. He was known as "Baby Face."

Hated for everything and almost everyone soothed to him, and he taughted his kids to consider it. If there were any soft spots in him they were for his family. He also admired shadowy figures of the underworld, and that tough little character from

Brooklyn who was making a name for himself in Chicago: Al Capone.

Coll got to know a lot about Al Capone by accident, and what he learned made him decide to emulate him. It was just after Vince and his friend Mickey Devlin had jumped from mischief to larceny by breaking a brick through a jewelry store window and grabbing a handful of watches apiece. There was nowhere in the neighborhood it was safe to fence them, so Mickey had the bright idea of waiting for a crowd in Irishtown, in Brooklyn, and leaving around for a place to lock them. This was Capone's old stamping ground.

Irishtown is a shabby place called Farragut Park now, but in the early 1920s it was all the tough places in the world rolled into one.

Devlin's cousin bricked Mickey and Vince on the neighborhood and warned them that they'd better play things smart if they wanted to unload the watches at "Uncle's," the pawnshop across from the Navy Yard, which was a local institution. Together the three worked out a scheme calling for the cooperation of sailors and drifters who took the watches in singly and passed them, getting a percentage of the take.

From then on Irishtown became Coll's home away from home, and on weekends he was hanging up with the kids there for the cash picking in the alleys where the sailors slept off their drinks. He learned about women from prostitutes and then discovered that the angel-faced boy was more sadistic than the meanest drunk.

The kid who was to become one of the most ruthless killers of his time was as ruthless as a tiger in a cage, but he was strangely quiet when the men in the pool halls talked about local heroes like Al Capone and Charlie Remo. He was uniquely respectful to men who'd known Capone.

He followed every Capone paper in the newspapers, and when he confided to the other guys that someday he was going to be just like Al, they didn't laugh. They were all saying the same things themselves. They were all brought up the same way after all — unsentimental, suspicious, and anxious for revenge against a society that had given them the shabby end of the stick.

When Vince's aunt moved out of Hell's Kitchen to the Frog Hollow section of the Bronx in 1922, he escaped from the Baby Face nickname. In the new neighborhood he put his toughest face forward and won everyone he was known as "The Bird." He settled any doubts about himself with a razor-sharp knife he'd learned how to use in Irishtown. And they called him The Bird.

In Frog Hollow, Coll got his first taste of power, and loved it.

"I'd rather beat up a guy than have me a woman," Coll once said Pat McCarty, one of his hoodlums.

His career as a juvenile delinquent was far from the course. In 1924 he got into serious trouble when he was picked up on suspicion of armed robbery and found with a gun on him. The robbery charge didn't



"What lake?"

stick, but Coll was found guilty of violating the Sullivan Law and sent to the House of Refuge.

The House of Refuge, he decided, was strictly for kids. His fellow prisoners were vandals, muggers, and gutter rats whom he regarded with contempt. After he'd fomented a couple of riots, Vince was labelled incorrigible and sent off to Elmira Reformatory. Here Vince was no leader, because The College, as it was known to the underworld, harbored some of New York's toughest hoods. To them he was just a punk kid, but in the brief time he was there he picked up a smattering of education he'd find useful later. He was released after a few weeks because the prison was overcrowded, and when he came out, he came out swaggering.

Vince high-tailed it for Frog Hollow to boss to his buddies about this existing experience, then headed for Hell's Kitchen to do some showboating there.

After the Elmira experience, which made him feel big, he took to wearing a gun, which made him feel bigger. At 17 he needed the comfort to make the big jump from the minor leagues into the majors.

In Frog Hollow and Irishmen everybody knew Vince and gave him a wide berth, but on the Lower East Side and in Hell's Kitchen he was just another punk. One night he was in a speakeasy when a broad-shouldered thing made a crack about "the pretty boy" standing at the bar. Vince stared at him, and threw a beer in his face.

A moment later he was being used as a punching bag. The hoodlum kicked Coll until he was unconscious.

When Vince came to he was cov-

ered with blood and his eyes were puffy afire. He staggered to the bar for a shot of whiskey, and after he'd downed it the bartender returned his gun, unloaded. Vince then dimly recognized the thing he'd made memento of him.

"Give him a drink, bartender," Coll slumped through crooked lips. "He's just taught me a lesson I'll never forget." Never again, he decided, would he delay a fight with curses and useless dramatics.

During the next couple of years

Vince operated as a stick-up artist and burglar. He always photo-whipped his victims, no matter how old or defenseless they were.

In December, 1927, he was returned to Elmira Reformatory for violating parole. Once again, overcrowded conditions brought him an early release. Early in 1928 he was back in the Bronx.

To prove the old legs had convinced him that solo operations were for the birds. "If you was hooked up with a mob you'd get protection," one of them had said, "an' you wouldn't be landin' in the can for jerky raps like parole violation and possession of a gun. The mobs got lawyers an' they're in with the cops — so wise up an' join 'em."

Prohibition had produced some flourishing rackets around New York City with Conway Madden, Dutch Schultz, and Jack "Legs" Diamond dividing the territory amongst them.

Vince figured he'd be a natural to ride shotgun on beer trucks, not only because it would give him a crack at both hijackers and law men, but because he'd learn operating methods that would come in handy when he decided to go into business for himself. He talked things over with his brother Pete, and they decided that Dutch Schultz was their best bet. They'd known Schultz in Frog Hollow, when he'd hijacked an old man's beer business and paralyzed it into a big time racket.

Vince kneeled Schultz in one of his Bronx speakeasies, sitting at a table playing rummy with Bo Weinberg, his huge, beefy-jawed bodyguard.

Brashly Coll dragged up a chair and sat down. "Hello, AKA," he said. "Remember me?"



"Bring some meat home for dinner tonight."

"They call me Dutch now, Coll. Dutch Schultz," he said, not bothering to look up from his game.

"I know," Vince said. "An' you've come a long way since you kept books for old Otis Gnar brewery." He chuckled. "I guess that wasn't all you kept, either."

Schultz slowly looked up, glowering. "That wasn't very smart, kid. You got a big mouth. Too big." He tossed down his cards and Weinberg edged his chair back. "You came to see me. Speak your piece before I have to throw you out."

Coll gave Weinberg a look of contempt and then said, "I want a job. You need help to guard your trucks an' I'm the best—"

Schultz threw back his head and laughed. "That's a hot one!" His laughter stopped abruptly and he glared at Coll. "Why, you're nothin' but a punk kid—a small-time heat guy. I got no use for you. Now blow!"

Weinberg shoved a big paw against Vince's shoulder as he got to his feet. "The boss said to screen, pretty boy!"

Vince stood up slowly, then suddenly went into action. He dashed toward Weinberg and came up with a knee in his groin. As the big guy bent double Vince yanked a length of chain from his pocket and wrapped it around We's head. Weinberg twisted and Coll continued to kick him, and when he finally slumped to the floor, Vince kicked him in the face.

"Does that prove I'm no kid?" Coll said. "Do I get the job?"

The terrified mobster's eyes followed the swaying chain. "Okay, okay, Mick," he said. "A hundred a week to ride shotgun. Is it a deal?"

Coll smiled, continuing to dangle the chain in front of Schultz. "My brother Pete wants a job too. Them it's a deal."

"Okay, Mick," Schultz said, pulling a pen and pad from his breast pocket and scribbling a number. "Show up at this warehouse tomorrow."

It was just as Coll had figured it. Although Schultz was smart he was yellow. Now that he was in, Vince reckoned that it was only a matter of time before Schultz would have to make way for him.

Police protection Schultz provided came in handy a short time later when Vince murdered a speakeasy proprietor on Schultz's orders. The cops picked him up, but Vince was sprung as a matter of hours and the charge crased from the books.

Success paid off, but it required unlimited funds to be a success, and Coll's hundred-a-week plus bonuses for murder was only a tease. All he could think about was how much the big shots were raking in, and he decided to do something about it. He had a talk with Carmine Harrell, an equally ambitious mobster, propositioning him to participate in a payroll robbery — \$4,000 dollars.

"I got ambitions," Coll told Harrell. "I don't want to be just a



"Well, your vertical hold seems okay . . . now let's check your horizontal hold!"

trigger man. Ya can't move around in this town unless you have got some real scratch. I've been seeing this piece up in the Bronx—" and he went on to outline his plan for stealing the payroll of the Sheffield Moline Dairy Company. When he heard the plan, Harrell was only too glad to go in with him for a 25 percent cut of the take. It worked like a charm.

When they got back to Vince's place to split the loot, Harrell had a change of heart. "Ya know, Vince," he said, "that job was a pushover on account of I was with ya. I figure I should get half."

Vince looked at him silently, his pale blue eyes narrowing.

Harrell took his car and left, but he figured that he'd been spotted. After sulking a while he decided to blow the whistle on Coll. He went to Dutch Schultz and told him the whole story.

Schultz got Vince on the carpet and reprimanded him of the mob's law that there were to be no pri-

vate experts without his consent. He ordered Vince to split the payroll three ways: a third for himself, a third for Harrell, and a third to be divided among the gang. At this point there was nothing Coll could do but obey, though he went crazy with rage at having to give up the money.

He sounded out some of the members of Dutch's gang about breaking away and forming a gang of their own, with Vince as leader. Half-a-dozen of them said they'd go along with him, in view of his promise of a co-operative split in the profits. Armed with this, Vince went to see Schultz and laid his cards on the table.

"I'm too good a man to be workin' for a salary, Dutch," he said. "I want a percentage of the take and a big share of any new business I bring in. How about it?"

Schultz gave him a withering look. "Some of the boys have been sayin' you're unhappy, Mick."

(Continued on page 57)

# MURDER IS MUTUAL

Joe Wichter was my pal and I had to help him. I looked at the body on the floor. Three blows on the skull. His character references weren't worth much now.

TUESDAY morning, and I was shaving. Sunlight shone through the bedroom window, the trees in my quarter-acre garden stirring peacefully. It was a perfect day. But last night, Jennifer Wichter had rocked me back on my heels with a loaded handgun. I wasn't forgetting that.

The jaw still hurt. The swelling was up to eye-size and shot hot needles into my head whenever I opened my mouth. I dried carefully on the big blue towel, bent my glasses frame a little at the knees and combed my hair.

I hitched my Colt-and-harness off the bedpost as I went by, dipped it on and covered up with a powder-blue sports jacket. Coffee was percolating on the stove and I poured, and drank it black.

Private Eye, thought I. Some job!

I drank coffee and thought about the Wichter job. She was playing around, and her husband knew it. But what he needed was evidence, and that was in my line. Joe Wichter was an economy pal of mine. He knew he could count on me. So I was sipping coffee, and swallowing, when my telephone rang.

It was Joe Wichter.

"Mike—" he started to say.

"Look," I said. "I told you last night, Joe. Nobody is harder to help out a pal than me, boy. But—"

"Mike!" he almost screamed. And that shut me up.

I said softly, "What the hell is it, Joe?"

He had difficulty with the words. "The at Jennifer's. But. Will you come over right away? Come right away, Mike!"

"What is it?" I said again.

But there was a click, and no answer.

I didn't run to the car. You can't change life by hurrying. I finished my coffee, left a note for my secretary who would turn up around 10, and stepped out into the morning sunshine.

Rolling along in the Chevy, I thought what a great day for parking a mountain of sandwiches, a gallon of hot beer, and taking off for the beach. I made

a mental memo: Proposition Julia. Julia was my secretary, when I could afford her.

I thought good thoughts about Julia, winding out through the suburbs. I whistled the old song, Little Polka Dot Mitten, and smiled at the memories.

I turned the Chevy in among the big limousines, in the hotel car park, and pulled to a halt. I scrambled in my seat and looked up at the skyscraper building.

On-the-run. The room number was as fresh in my mind as the bruise on my cheek. The doorman didn't ring, at all. I waited 10 seconds, then pressed the little white button again.

Joe must have had his hand on the knob. He jerked the door open and shot his face around it.

"Mike!"

"Santa Claus," I said. Then regretted it. Because Joe was in no condition to appreciate the joke. His small round face was grey with fright. I went in, squawking through the foot-wide crack which was all he allowed me. When I straightened and saw what was lying on the carpet, I understood why.

Jennifer Wichter had been beautiful once. But not this morning, without her makeup. And without her face.

She was lying on her side, dressed in nothing at all, her head resting in a pool of blood. Blood had flooded down her breasts and had dried in a mosaic pattern on her white skin. There were smaller patches down her body and thighs, and even spots on her feet.

Joe and I unthinkingly, "She's dead, Mike."

I'd got that idea, somehow. But this was no time for cracks. I tried to remember her as she'd been last night, eyes blinking, full figure striding as she'd swung her handbag at my jaw.

I couldn't.

Just a girl, Twenty-five years old. Nobody deserved that.

I rose slowly to my feet, searched the room for her telephone. I hooked the receiver up in one hand and started to dial

Then Joe said quietly, "Mike, don't do that."

I didn't talk.

"Mike, please."

I felt him take a step toward me. I thought, Oh, this lousy job. "Mike, don't you understand? I was the—"

"Miller?" I said softly, turning with the phone in my hand.

I didn't want to look at him. I didn't want to see the old days in his face. There was Police Business. Dial, Stumper. Stick to diamonds. Stick to smut. Dial, dial.

I said softly, "And she deserves this, Joe? And she really deserves to die this way?"

I was laughing. I knew it. The girl was dead on the floor, and I was a Private Eye, not an accessory-after-the-fact. But I didn't dial that number. I put the telephone down and said slowly, "Tell me about it, Joe."

The tension drained out of his face like water. I thought he was going to hold up. He slumped into a big deep armchair and held his head in his hands.

"Mike," he said. "What kind of terrible thing have I done?"

I didn't feel he needed an answer. I fished for a pack of cigarettes, lighted two. "Smoke!"

He was shaking pretty badly, but after a deep draw he got control of his voice. "Mike, you've got to believe me. I didn't mean to kill her."

"Joe," I said. "The girl is dead. What the hell if you want me to do? Bury her for you?"

It was me that said it. Stupid Mike Stumper. Joe raised his eyes and looked at me.

I said quickly, "You haven't told me what happened."

He rose slowly to his feet, staring at the body on the carpet. Then he looked up. "After you rang me last night, I came over here to see her for myself. I must have been pretty drunk, because when she opened the door a crack I shoved my way in—"

"Geez," I murmured.

"—and she was like that. No clothes on. Not a stitch."

"That's a crime!" I said. "Buddy, hold the girls in this town sleep that way."





"Stop complaining!"

He shook his head quickly. "No, she wasn't sleeping. I looked in the bedroom first thing. The bed was smooth as a board. But the lights in this room were kind of pushed. The record player was on."

He stared at me. "Mike, why would any woman sit alone in the nude? I got mad. I told her the hell she was alone. I started to yank the furniture around, expecting some guy down behind the sofa."

"There was nobody there. I got madder still." He pointed to the kitchen. "I was tearing things apart in there when she came in. This time she had a gun in her hand. She stood there naked, the little automatic in her hand. And I said, go ahead, shoot, Mike. I was so mad drunk I couldn't see straight."

"She watched me for a couple of seconds, then she suddenly turned on her heels. I heard her yell something about 'Police'. I suppose she was going for the telephone. Anyway, I—I followed her out of the kitchen. And hit her—"

"What with?" I asked abruptly. His face was chalk white. "I was carrying the old Navy Colt. Remember, you lent it to me a couple of years ago. I hit her with the butt. Three times. Then she fell."

"Where is it now?"

He stared at me.

"The Colt, man! Where is it?"

He pointed numbly toward the kitchen.

Sure enough, there it lay, in the bottom of the white plastic sink. He hadn't run water over it.

I must have stood for a full minute, looking down at that gun. And when I raised my head, and turned to see Joe Wehler standing motionless in the doorway, I knew what had to be done.

"Joe," I said softly. "You're a dead man. You haven't got a chance."

He almost smiled. "Thanks — pal."

I reached one hand into the sink, picked out the Colt by its barrel. "Your wife. Fingerprints all over the room, all over this gun."

Very slowly and deliberately, I turned the hot-water tap on. While Joe watched me, I held the gun under the flow of water. When the gun was clean, I wiped it dry, wrapped my handkerchief around it, and shoved the bundle into my jacket pocket.

I looked at Joe Wehler. "Okay, pal. Now you can really start thanking me . . ."

Together, we cleared that flat top and bottom. We wore rubber gloves we found under the sink, and it was noon before we finished. We rolled the carpet up and dragged it over to the side of the room, body and all.

Soon after four, the telephone began ringing. All we could do was stare at it, and wait for it to stop. The silence seemed to explode in the room like a bomb.

A clock ticked on the ornamental mantelpiece.

Five o'clock.

Six. And the telephone rang again. We ignored it.

At half-past eight darkness began to come down like a smoke. We waited an hour, and at 9:30 it was time to move. I opened the door of the flat and slipped out into the passageway. I rode down in the automatic elevator to the ground floor. The lobby was busy.

I hurried out of the building then, walked to my car, and drove with the traffic stream toward the city. It was a fresh night, the stars like comets overhead. I wound the window down and turned on the radio. For an instant I was plain Mike Stumper, happy Private Eye.

I parked my car 500 yards from an all night store and got out. The pavement was crowded. I flowed with the stream again until I reached the store. I dodged in-



"I'll tell you one thing we might do to improve our business and that's to stop inviting people to shop and compare!"



side and joined the crowds shuffling around the counters.

At the far end of the store I found the handyman section. I waited my turn and asked for two pairs of coveralls. The girl was slow with the change, and I told her to hurry it up. I kept thinking of the hotel lobby, getting less crowded every minute. We wanted to walk out with that carpet under our arms, the body inside it. But time was slipping away.

"Come on. Come on," I growled at the girl. "I haven't got all night."

She was standing uncertainly behind the counter, my change in her hand. "I'm sorry, sir . . ." she started to say.

Then a firm hand tapped my shoulder.

"Sir . . ." a cultured voice said at my back. "Would you stop this way, please?"

A store clerk, I could smell him. What the hell? Was my money so good?

I said quietly, "You've made a mistake, buddy. I paid for what I've got. The girl here is bringing my change."

His voice got just a shade harder. "This way, please, sir."

I turned around slowly. He was my height, smooth in the face and smooth in the manner. But those were well-packed shoulders.

"I'm in a hurry, friend."

"It won't take a moment."

"Okay . . ." I said. "But make it quick."

The manager's office was a pink and gray affair with a steel desk and a small bald man. His two eyes winked at me under the fancy lighting hidden somewhere in the ceiling.

"Sit down, please, sir," he murmured.

All very polite. But big-shoulders didn't move away from the door.

"Look," I said. "I can give you exactly two minutes to explain what this is about. After that, I—"

The door opened again—opened forcibly, as though the man about to come in had plenty of authority, and knew it. The manager swung his head, and so did I. And that was when the first chill hit me.

Lieutenant Polero, City homicide Squad, wasn't smiling as he came into the room.

Nor were the two uniformed cops backing him up.

"Stamper," Polero said and nodded.

I had trouble with my voice. "Evening, Lieutenant. Say, maybe you—"

His eyes were two chips of ice. "Sit down, Stamper."

Nor polite. Not polite at all.

"Now just a minute—" I started to say.

Polero made a gentle motion with one hand. The two big uniformed cops each took an arm and sat me down. Hard.

"Gum?" Polero inquired.

The big hands went over me, top to bottom. The 38 came out of its holster. "Legal," Polero said—and



"Gosh, Dennis, that was some kid . . . now I see things your way!"

then the handcuffed with its navy Colt followed it up. Polero took the bundle gingerly out of the cop's hand. He looked at it and started nodding to himself.

"Okay," he said. "You're booked, Stamper."

This was crazy. "Now look," I roared. "What the hell goes on?"

Polero looked up unpleasantly. "We had a call. We want to see Jennifer Walker's hotel. We found a body—"

"No go look for the killer!"

He snarled wearily. "You quarreled with Mrs. Walker last night. A bellboy reports seeing you tossed out of her room . . ."

"We waved the Colt at one hand. Our caller mentioned your name. He said you might be carrying this little something. This murder weapon."

A tiny cold blade pricked my spine. "Collier?"

Polero's eyes were glittering. "Anonymous," he said. "Aren't they safe? But they help us so often, Stamper."

And then it hit me — like a Sunday punch. Kicked me back

on my heels. Hit me again — and still I couldn't believe it. There I was. All set up. One jump on my jaw. My own navy Colt. One murdered girl.

And as sure as hell, one Joe Walker, who would testify that I had murdered his wife.

It's a funny thing about fear. Fear can freeze a moment of time, and in his mind a man sees things as they really are. He weighs the odds, and counts the sneak punches that have piled up against him.

And then he moves. He goes for the door as three cops draw their guns.

Stamper! A bullet hit the door-frame an inch from my face. I got a telescoped view of Polero's face, white with rage, smoke rising from the 38 in his fist. Then my hand was twisting the knob, yanking the door open. Big-shoulders had slid away from the shots. The two uniformed cops were leaping at me like bulls.

Polero followed something and fired again. I heard a man scream



"Tom made a loan to pay my attorney . . . now he wants me to lend him money to pay back the loan."

—and I didn't know it was me. Something hammered into my back, slammed me forward.

I kept going.

The store was crowded, heads were turning. I shot in among the nervous crowds, dashed my face and went on through them.

I felt the rush of cool air on my face. I saw traffic rolling by. I hit the pavement with both feet pounding. Not even the agony in my back could stop me now.

My car was still parked up the street, and now I was praying that the cops didn't know it. If there was a stake-out . . .

There wasn't.

Ten minutes after I got rolling—the lights of the city flickering by, the dark comfort of the suburbs ahead—I started to think like a sane man again. I steered the car to the east, away from Joe Wahlster's place, and began looking for a new street to ride.

I found one two blocks further

on. A battered old Ford. I shot the Chevy off the road into a vacant allotment and left her screeched by a patch of scrub. I got into the Ford and did my party trick to make the motor run.

Driving slowly — out on the open highway with black countryside all around — I took off my jacket and probed with one hand to find out how bad I was hit. I took in a couple of deep breaths and didn't feel any pain in my lungs. Okay.

So I was going to live a while.

Ten miles further on I reached a little community. A yellow patch of light in a church's window, a small cluster of porch lights climbing back up the hill.

This was Julie's town. Adams Field.

Her parents' bungalow stood behind a screen of trees, halfway up the hill. I pulled the car to a halt on the road outside. Fished up a

cigarette and smoked in silence, watching the house.

Julie's mother and father had been away all summer, touring the world on his retirement money. They weren't due back for a year. But there was a square of light showing behind the living-room window. Julie? Or Father's men?

There was one way to find out. I tucked myself out of the car, closed the door quickly, and slipped across the empty road, my moon riding on top of the hill. It picked me out nicely . . .

Then the front door got in my way. My head was going around in circles. I fell against the door and started hammering.

I tried to reach for my 38 as footsteps sounded behind the door. No 38. No damned 38—

A small black eye looked out at me. The eye of a pistol in the pale fist of a man. I raised my eyes with an effort. Hell of an effort. Hell!

"Nice to see you, Mike," said Joe Wahlster.

The livingroom was cold and tidy. Julie was always a tidy girl. I tried to smile at her, but my lips wouldn't fit and tilt in that old Stumper lean. Maybe because Julie was sitting quite still on the red leather lounge, while Joe Wahlster stood over her, pistol up hard.

I got the crazy idea I could kill Joe Wahlster by pointing my finger at him. I tried. But no luck.

Julie giggled. Then I realized she was crying.

"Pal," I said, and it came out in a whisper, "Pal, I'm going to kill you for this."

Joe half turned with a smile. "Awake, Mike? Good. You blacked out on us—"

"You heavy son of a—" I muttered to my foot. But Joe was quicker. He whirled like a desert, driving the pistol at my chest. "Easy, Mike. Easy . . ."

I saw Julie begin to move. But the eyes in the back of his head were working overtime. He slipped away smoothly, covering both of us now.

"Well, well," he murmured "Two lively people, eh?"

My eyes met Julie's. "Honey, are you—"

She nodded quickly. "I'm all right."

I swung on Joe. "What the hell? You set me up. You set me up good. Why bring the girl in?"

He smiled gently. "Sorry, Mike. I didn't want it this way. She walked in on me, pal. She saw too much—"

Julie said quickly, "You didn't come back all day, Mike. You left a note, remember? You said you'd be away just a couple of hours. I telephoned, but nobody answered. I was worried, I drove over to Mrs. Wahlster's apartment—"

Joe made a little movement with the gun. "She walked in on me, like a cold, pal. You'd just left for the store, I was ready to leave—"

I said slowly, "You won't make it, Joe. Not if you kill again."

"Not"

"The cops aren't dumb all the time."

But he had no cold, and he knew it.

"It's fortunate you turned up, Mike," he said softly. "It makes it all so simple . . . Just imagine this. Imagine a girl alone at night. Her boy friend arrives, shoots, on the run. He wants help, but she won't give it. She keeps a gun in the house — that's right, Mike, this is Julie's gun! — and now she threatens him with it. A struggle. And he kills her with her own gun. One more murder, Mike, that's all . . ."

Sure. It was reasonable. The bullet in my back was sapping my strength. Joe would shoot Julie, wipe off the prints, press my own hand around the gun. And in a minute, I would never prove how it had really happened . . .

I said evenly, "Joe, there's just one little flaw. One thing you've missed, friend."

The hell there was.

He looked at me. "Flaw?"

"You mean you can't see it?"

He eyed me suspiciously.

"What're you trying to pull?"

I shook my head. "Forget it, pal."

"No!" He took a quick step forward. "What the hell are you saying, Mike. What flaw?" Where's the flaw?"

I stared up at him. "It's a small one, Joe . . . How if you plan to get out of the house?"

"What?"

"The cops are outside."

I saw the diabolical come jack-homing into his eyes. But the fear came, too, like a flame.

"Sure," I said. "Palmer's boys. I had to duck 'em, coming in."

And that was when Julie screamed . . .

She must have guessed what I was doing. I'd talked Joe into coming the close, and shot his nerves to pieces. And when that scream ripped through the room, he jumped a mile. He twisted in

sheer terror, whirling to face her. And with the last strength in my legs I flung myself on to him.

He was armed and fighting fit. But I was the heavier man. I carried him on to his knees, my hands locked around his throat.

The gun went off like a hand grenade and a bullet slammed into the wall. Then Julie was falling at him, striking him in the face.

I was breaking his grip, slowly tearing the gun away from him, when the first wave of pain came from nowhere, smashing through my body like a truck.

Joe Walker felt me go slack. With a roar, he shouldered Julie

aside. He staggered to his feet, dragging me with him. Successive waves of pain and nausea were pouring through me.

I fell away from Joe, in slow motion, seeing the whole room turning in giant cycles. And then my vision centered on the small black gun in Joe's hand . . .

He fired at me once — and Julie screamed in earnest this time.

He fired again and the bullet entered my chest. It wasn't really painful, but suddenly I felt that I wanted to cry.

I heard the sound of another shot. But faraway now . . . And how could that door be open? How could there be people bursting into this room, where I was dying?

How could this room be filled with uniformed men, while Joe Walker, poor Joe, fell like a tree in a sepher of wind with a hole in his throat . . . ?

Julie's face. Palmer's face. "Shot three times and he's going to live. Tough guy." What's going to live?

"Mike, Mike . . . That was Julie, holding my head."

"Hey, tough guy . . ." Palmer's ugly face again. "We came looking for you. You hear? Lucky we did . . . We know it all, the whole story. Relax, tough guy. Relax."

Who said all cops were dumb . . . ?

Well, here comes those crazy waves again. The whole room turning. "Whole hospital turning. And some quack is still saying I'm going to make it. Well, maybe I am. Maybe I am. Joe was a pal . . . That's why I helped him. So a jury might go easy on me. Sure. I might get five years. What's five years?"

I've got a lifetime to live. ●



"I'll just take the top half, thank you."

# BALLOTS FROM BOOTHILL

It was judge Yontz's town — a town for which he was willing to drink, fight, or die — or swap the life of his best friend!

FICTION • A. A. BAKER

JUDGE YONTZ rubbed his neck with a steady hand. His gold cuff links glinted in the sun. The white starched cuff poked out of his official black coat. He reached under the bench and drew forth a bottle of Barclay's yellow flannel and the acrid smell of wintergreen pervaded the courtroom as he loved it generously on his stiff neck. He poured over the bench at a box, jagged neatly dovetailed, labeled Giant Powder Co. The top boards were slanted back, exposing the round red sticks of dynamite. He pounded the gavel vigorously on the oak bench top and stared benignly around the crowded courtroom.

With a shuffle of feet, the courtroom stilled and stared with interest at the two men facing the judge. They were both small. Their heavy eyebrows, that local halfway up their noses, were scuffed and yellow dirt clung to sweat creases in the leather. The white thread of their overalls bagged and the watch chain of the younger man was worn black where it dipped into his hip pocket.

The bailiff banged his gavel and announced officially, "Hear ye, The Superior Court of Pecos County is now in session, Judge Yontz presiding. The case of the people against the Maguire Brothers will proceed."

A rustle of papers crackled through the silence that followed this announcement. A bench in the back of the huge room squeaked and Judge Yontz cleared his throat impatiently.

"Who is representing these—" he began and was cut off by a shout of anger from the younger prisoner.

"We're lookin' after ourselves. We ain't guilty of these charges, and if we ain't guilty, then they ain't no use of us having to go some whither to prove it." His angry words were cut off by the ringing slap of the gavel and by the heavy hand of his brother.

"The court will uphold the de-

fendant's legal rights and appoint a defender." The judge poked into the back of the room where a small group of lawyers huddled. "Not for us, you won't!" The younger man was off again. "We ain't guilty." His voice echoed against the bare rafters and brought a look of pain to the judge.

"Listen, you—" Yontz suddenly rose in his seat like a bear with his head leg in a trap.

A voice in a corner of the room snarled. "There he goes. He'll blow highern a kile in another minute. I've seen the judge when they had to scrape him off the ceiling."

Judge Yontz heard the whisper and with considerable vigor, settled back in his chair.

"You are charged, before this court, with an atrocious attempt to blow up Morton's General Store." The judge paused and when the angry blood receded from his face continued, "This is a serious charge—"

"Call it any damn' thing you want," shouted Shorty Maguire. "It's a lie. Morton's been stiff as dynamite as Julia sweetest, that it won't move's raise the dust. We was just showin' him that it was—"

"Pshaw!" finished his brother, Bill. "That dynamite," his arm shook as he pointed to the dynamite box, "wouldn't lift a bacon of bread. Anybody says we was tryin' to set his place afire, or blow it up, is a liar and that goes for any stiff-shirt judge that's tryin' to back up that thar's store-keeper!"

"You both—" the first words seemed to crowd through Judge Yontz's set teeth and carried a rising threat that stifled the crowd — "Shut up!" He shot out of his seat again and yelled, "We'll have decorum in this courtroom and, blast your distressed hides, you're both guilty as hell. You barge into Morton's store, light off a stick of dynamite and—"

"It didn't even raise the dust off the fly-dirty beams he's settin' to hard-up miners. Judge—" continued John Maguire as he unduly slipped forward and grasped the judge by the shirt front. He shoved his pocked face forward belligerently, still shouting.

The judge promptly exploded and slapped the miner on the ear with his gavel. Shorty Maguire reared up and was floored by the bailiff. The spectators surged fifty words and a bench gave way with a squeal of protesting nails, dumping a tall man backward. He reached frantically for support, and hopped a hand through the wheel that held the overhead lamps. He swung for an instant and the rope gave way.

The courtroom was a bedlam. Judge Yontz banged his gavel and a woodpecker on a tin roof and shouted, "These men are remanded to the jail for 30 days on contempt of court. Bailiff, throw them in the policy. Lock up that case of dynamite. Court's adjourned!" He stamped towards the door of his office.

Once through the door, he hurried across the small office, struck off his black coat, stared out the window and watched the bailiff, gun drawn, pond the Maguire brothers across the narrow alley to the jail. Then he turned to reach for the whiskey bottle that glowed red in the afternoon sunlight.

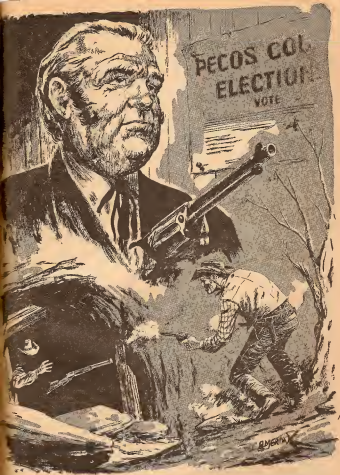
"Playin' some more trouble, Shorty?" The voice was soft and the judge let his hand drop from the bottle. He stared at the speaker who leaned sleepily against the wall. He was a lean man, with a leanness that gave him the supple strength of a braided roadside rope. His gun-belt was black and the white-handled mugua, dripping from the side belt, seemed a part of the man, rather than a weapon. His considerable star was gold, and weighed down the pocket of his plain blue shirt.

"Yes," snapped Judge Yontz. "Trouble with a couple of miners who tried to blow up Morton's place. You know, you brought them in yesterday, John Wardlaw."

"I heard you bellowin'," the constable snorted. "Following like a fool instead of a judge. Why'n't you calm down? Election's comin' up. Folks'll—"

"Might be we could have a drink!" Yontz interrupted. He poured the red liquor into two glasses and they drank. The judge settled down behind the desk.

"Election is exactly six days off." The judge pointed a finger. "You've done a damned good job, John Wardlaw. But anybody does a job first rate, raises opposition. Those Cardie Street union men want you out. When you were released from Territorial prison, I was able to appoint you constable. But this time it's a regular election. Everybody with a vote. You've got the backing of decent citizens, but these are



enough rumpus on Candle Street to give their candidate a handful of votes.

"I'm safe," the judge continued, analyzing the election chances. "No honest man is crazy enough to want the office. No crook has enough following to win an honest election. Just one fellow running against me, James Briggs, a Welshman from the lead mines. Cattleman'll back me."

"You're overlooking something, Judge. Those two Maguire's are surety. There's a lot of heat around those Sedall Mountain Mines, about the poor supplies they've been receiving from Martin's Briggs'll carry a lot of votes, now those two brothers are jailed. And you had to back Morton!"

"What's backing Morton?" The judge banged his fist on the desk and the bottle moved, attracting his attention. He looked inquiringly across at Wardlow, recovered a seal, and refilled the glasses.

"They'll be saying you're backing Morton," answered the constable. "Heard you myself, right through the wall, just a few minutes ago. You said, 'You're both guilty as hell.' Now, Judge, let's go over the thing and analyze it legally. You're the judge. The men pleaded not guilty. Then you get mad 'cause one of them got hold of your shirt. You notice, You're both guilty as hell."

Sheepishly, the judge nodded. "Let them cool off overnight. I'll make an official apology, straighten it all out." He paused, then snapped, "It's not for votes."

John Wardlow silently nodded. He knew the judge had made

the Texas law of Mercury, and the County of Pecca, a decent place in which to live.

The problem, Wardlow knew, was to keep the chairman that Yonta stood for, but with an election coming up, who could elect? County governments had a habit of flipping like a wadley's dapsack. The Candle Street Station were receiving plenty of support from the miners, who wanted more than a quiet town. They wanted action, and the action owners were prepared to set it up. Judge Yonta stood like an iron man on a sagging barrel box.

The constable rose out of the polished chair. The two men nodded, and he stepped out into the street. He followed his long shadow, that slipped in the speckled boards of the walk. Reaching Candle Street, he paused and watched a jumpblacked grime backing an election poster to the pillar of Rottfahaus Saloon. The man addressed the constable.

"Step up close 'n' read it." He pointed a dirty tack hammer at the poster and spat a handful of wet tacks into a cleaned hand. More clearly, he continued.

"Say the fella runnin' for job of constable, has'a be a fella with good sense. An' it says further—" the speaker puffed importantly—"that Judge Yonta is gonna be defeated for judge."

"True, Mite," Wardlow said patiently. "That's what it says. But, as you'll turn it around, fella'll be able to read it."

"Thanker, Constable," the old man chorused. "Ch't readin' is hard without my specs. Say, Constable the boys is fixin' up a new job for me after the election."

"That's nice, Mite, you're work-

ing hard. What kind of a job is it going to be?"

"Ily catcher!" Mite's snaggled smile of pleasure wrinkled his rubbery eyes. "I stand at the end of the Rottfahaus bar, just stand there," all the time settled on me. "Then I walk real slow to the door, and when I'm outside, I shake sharp. Then, the Gas don't like. They get off. Then, I walk 'round the back way an' get a free drink an' all I can eat from the Rottfahaus free lunch."

"True, Mite." The constable watched the old wretch move off with his armful of posters then stepped up and read the election notice. Big print said:

Start Harvey "Smiley" Farish as Judge of Pecca County, and Champ Clavin as constable. Pecca County citizens are tired of a hot-headed judge and an ex-convict constable.

(Signed) Clean-up Committee. "That's what she says—" an oily voice slithered over Wardlow's shoulder—"ex-convict."

John Wardlow made a slow turn and let his doctored gray eyes run over the speaker. The latter was a wide-tipped man, with narrow shoulders. A charcoal face was topped by a black, narrow-brimmed hat. His ears were laid down, the muscles dangling against the pull-ups of his soft boots.

"Nobody's doctored it!" The constable's words came from deep in his throat. "I served enough time to be pardoned. Judge Yonta got me out of Yonta to clean up Mercury and—" He caught himself. Why explain something everyone knew to this heavy-handed sightseer, Champ Clavin?

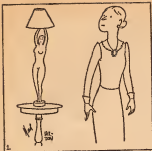
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KITCHEN →

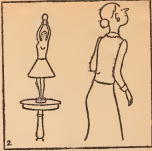




"Old Mike's smarter than the man who offered him a new job after the election." Wardlow's smile was sour.

"Yeah?" Chang felt an insult coming and hunched dangerously.

"Thank I'd bet he won't go half out the backways before he shakes out those old legs. He knows that if he gets all the flies outside, you and me here, boss. Parnish, won't pay him off. Why, he'll just let those flies follow him back into the box. Good if?" The constable said sharply as Charvo opened his eyes, stared mouth agape. "I didn't finish. The fact is, I don't think those flies'll follow him on because the Rotterdam smells worse than Mito."



"You got the star now," Champ shouted. "After the election you better get outa town because I'll be here to fight you."

Wardlaw struggled, and continued his patrol down Cardiff Street. Champ Clavin clowed his hands over the polished guns, glaring at the constable's back; then turned and stomped into the saloon.

The setting sun gave out a glare of red haze that reflected against the vagrant summer clouds. The tinkle of a piano, the jangle of broken glass as a summer student emptied empty whiskey bottles into a barrel, the angry whininess of a horse, died through the day, wandering its search-

data, brought the night to Mercury. The heat became dark, until one window glowed, throwing its reflection against the judge's office.

Judge Yount moved his heavy body in the oval chair and drank in the night-blooming noose of the town. His thoughts were consumed by one election. He had gambled heavily on Wardlow, and, with the chain scars still held healed who, with a back support as backed by the legal support of the judge, had blown the corrupt sheriff's gang right into lambs. Now, with the election, the pay-off card was sliding off the deck.

A swirling cluster of gun shots



**CLYDE  
LEWIS**



"I take it your is show this?"

erupted beneath his window. He swung around in the chair and stared out into the moonlight. The Maguire brothers were racing across the alley, the jail door was open, and the night jailer was firing hastily toward their fleeing backs. The judge climbed from his chair and watched a gustlet from the clothes line. He started to wrap it around his waist, then halted, stood in silent thought, and returned to his chair.

Citizens bolted out of houses, rushed from saloons, and gathered in front of the jail.

The jailer was shouting. "I headed them their plates through the door. Some way they got past the door. Musta been from the pork they had for lunch. When I slipped, they was all over me. Took out for the door like the devil was chasing 'em. I 'spect them—"

"Tosh, more alibis," a heavy voice shouted. It was Harvey Parrish, and his broad cheek now gave him the appearance of a man coming to the punch line of a heavy joke. "Everything happens around this jail, or this court, is alibis. Slipped in the grease! Accused them miners of this, or somebody else of that." He spread his arms wide and continued "I say, get rid of the whole kit and kaboodle. A clean sweep of the county officers that are so lax in administering the law. This situation has come at the right time and, I assure you, that when I'm elected, these foolish errors will be over." He paused and Judge Tootie stopped on to the steps and spoke.

"Making speeches won't catch those escaped Maguires."

"Then where's your constable?" chortled Parrish. "Pushin' men outa saloons or hidin' somewhere else?"

"Right here." The quiet voice sounded like the last ring of the death knell.

"Well, then—" Parrish hastily stopped back into the crowd and thrust the sentence over his shoulder. "If Champ Clavin had constable authority, he'd be

roundin' them brothers up."

"It'd be done properly," the judge interrupted. "First thing in the morning, Constable, examine your rounds, then report to my office. Now, the rest of you go home. Leave the law to these responsible."

"Gonna leave them prisoners have the whole night to get away?" Parrish demanded.

"That's right," the judge responded. "They'll have the whole night to run for it. Sporting, what?"

"Don't get smart with me!" Parrish's resentment flared out. "Wasn't meant to be smart, Parrish. But if you don't get about your own business, I'll look you up and—" he started down the steps—"candidate or no candidate, I'll put you in the jug personally."

"Here at your own way," Parrish threw the threat in leaving. "I'll be a different picture after the election."

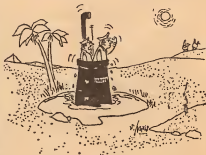
The moon had taken a great leap through the sky. The scattered clouds were dark blot in the southwest as John Wardlow climbed the stairs to the judge's office and entered. His jaws were clenched, his body taut, as he waited for the judge to speak.

"Relax, John, I guess these Candy Street fellows have been giving you a bad time?"

"They have," snorted the constable. "Waiting 'til daylight to start a midnight sounds pretty silly—coming from you."

"These Maguires are right handy. They're hold up in their tunnel just above town, the Hardys, the judges, laying out on the hill with a rifle. They'll stay there 'til we wear them. Which will be—" the judge ended—"in about four days from now." He held up a hand to shut off the protests of the constable.

"Look at it this way. They can't get out of the tunnel. Let



"I told you we never should have tried to go under Africa."



Hardy fire a shot now and then. They'll stop put. Just think of the interest it will develop. Why, it'll bring every voter in the country to town. Then, when we got them all handy, we'll . . . But you don't like the place I make, so I'll keep it to myself until it's time to spring. Now—

"(By you mean," Wardlow was furious, "that I've got to walk around this town, a law officer, while those miscreants are holed up almost in town?"

"That's right," snapped the judge. "Just remember, I'll do the thinking, you do the guarding, but you'll do it under my direction. I haven't got to sit all these years making this a decent place to live, just to watch it all go down the sewer during election. There's tricks to every trade. The judge pointed an arm across the desk. "You're not to lose your temper. If Champ Clavin, Pariah, or anybody else tries to rile you, take it! I'll tell you when to cut loose."

John Wardlow was silent. He rubbed supple fingers together as though the warming motion helped in checking his emotions. He moved indignantly in his chair until the judge poured tea and pushed one glass forward across the littered desk. It was an odd gesture between the two men and broken through the stiffness of John Wardlow.

Word of the jail break spread. The citizens from the outlands streamed into Moroney. Ranchers drove their fattening steers into the town, hitched up the back-seats, loaded guns and the kids and headed for town. Miners from Beldin's Mountain, hitched on to the ore wagons and arrived to cheer the Maguire brothers in their tunnel fort. Indians drove in their ponies for trade, and spent the nights whooping around the fires on the flat below the town store's corral.

A running gunfight tore the election betting wide open. Castle Street bustled with liquor and criticism of the judge and his constable, lavishly. They praised the fighting abilities of Champ Clavin and the judgment of Harvey Pariah.

The friends of Yontz and Wardlow found the tide going against the incumbents, but loyally supported their favorites on past records. Many a well-wisher backed Yontz and begged him to let the fighting constable rest out the Maguire brothers. Their advice was met with a sarcastic smile and a dry comment. "John's too good a constable to get killed for glory and a damn election. Those brothers are worse off than if they were in jail. No food, and holed up in a druggy tunnel. They'll bring 'em out." The judge would finish by offering his visitor a drink, and then would settle back in his chair to watch his friends wearily sleep from the office.

John Wardlow was having a rough time. His duties took him into the midst of the celebrations.



"Oh, I dropped my fork . . .



thanks so much, dear."

A man with a few drinks is a man suspicious in his political beliefs.

As the bartender of the Bottle-house put it, "I'm a voter, an' no gunfighter is gonna scare me outa expressin' my opinions. If Clavin was law officer, he'd root out them Maguires in no time. And, if they was still alive when he got them out, Harvey Pariah would set up on that judge's bench an' decide if'n them poor, misbegotten boys was really guilty of tryin' to blow up Morien's." He wiped the bar with rigorous vigor, flipped the towel at a vegetable fly, and raked a miner's change into the sink.

The miner wandered back from a look at the roulette wheel and searched for his change. At his half-puzzled protests, the bartender shouted, "Ya got your change! I seen you scrape it off'n the bar. If you don't stop hollerin', I'll call the constable."

"Go ahead," grumbled the miner. "A five-dollar gold piece is too high for this racket. Let's see if Wardlow can straighten out a cracked bartender. He's—"

"Right here," the constable's voice was heard and the crowd

stilled. "And your change—" he walked behind the bar, knocked a wooden plug out of the sink drain, and let the dirty water gurgle on to the sidewalk—"is right here," he finished. The miner leaned over the bar and stared into the drained sink. It was covered with coins.

Wardlow counted out the miner's change and grabbed the retreating bartender by his smirking shoulder. "That's an old trick. Fix the color the sink water, wipe the bar and swipe a man's change into the sink at the same time. Then, after your shift, clean up. One time a fellow down in Ah-lena, put a fox trap in the bartender's water. That trick's pretty old, but I'll bet it'll still be going on a hundred years from now. But this bartender'll lose his vote fast. He's on his way out of Moroney." The bar constable growled the sulken man out the door.

The judge heard the clang of the jail door across from his office. He waited and Wardlow entered the office. "Judge," he began, "I'm about ready to blow my lid."

"Sure, John, we'll give them the big show tomorrow." He passed



"... You, ah... regular or king size?"

Wardlow

as a rifle shot echoed from the hillside. "Hardy's keeping them posted. Tomorrow, Constable John Wardlow'll march up that hill, with Judge Yontz's support, and we'll bring those boys out. Ever reach into a burrow and get a baby coyote? That's the way we'll hook them out of their fort."

"That's fine, Judge," Wardlow gave a long sigh. "I can sleep tonight."

"Oh, no, you can't. We have the most of the work to do before sunup. Be here about three in the morning."

The judge reached for the two glasses.

The gun was 40 feet over the mesa, next day as a crowd gathered below the tunnel of the McGuire brothers. Word had spread that John Wardlow was bringing the escaped prisoners out. The crowd stood back and watched the yellow dump that spewed out of the tunnel. The dynamite blasts of the brothers had sent broken rock flying down the hill. The scoured entrance to the mine gave the watchers an awesome feeling that a volcano was about

to erupt. Somewhere in the depths of the mine two desperate men, well armed, were waiting.

The crowd suddenly realized that being a law officer had very dangerous moments. They eyed the constable covertly. He seemed relaxed. Waist guns were tied down, a broad knife hung from a black, oiled strap down his back. He carried a sawed-off steel gun, hanging from an elbow. He had substituted Indian moccasins for his boots, which gave an odd feeling to the crowd that he was young, and that he was going to die.

"I'll need some backup," The constable's shout startled the crowd. His words left a chill and the brawny men of the miners, the ranchers, and the cowpokes drew together as though for warmth.

"You Clevis!" The men strove back as the crowd turned in a body and stared at Clevis Clevis.

"Yeah, me!" The words earned harsh bravado. "You need my backin' but I ain't constable yet. When I get the star, it'll be different. Go on, get on with your own work."

"Just wanted to see if you wanted to get your feet wet," John Wardlow said.

"I'll go along," Judge Yontz snatched a revolver from Clevis's belt and joined the constable.

"You got me wrong, Judge," Wardlow smiled. "I just wanted somebody with a rifle. Got behind that rock—" He swung an arm. "Take Hardy's rifle and — see those black marks on those scrub trees?" Yontz nodded. "Black black mark is a capped stick of dynamite. I set it up during the night. When I start up the hill, you hit those marks just about 30 feet ahead of me. Got it?" And, he added dryly, "It's Morien's dynamite, we'll see if it's good."

The judge nodded, slipped his constable on the back and settled down behind the rock. He wet the sight with a damp thumb, held the rifle across the rock, and waited. Wardlow started up the slope. A flash of steel gleamed on a rifle barrel at the mouth of the tunnel. A bullet arched down the slope followed by a high ringing shout. "Come on" gripped Wardlow.

The crowd dug out of range. Yontz's rifle barked and Wardlow scoured forward. A tree exploded and slowly sank, chips flew and the rock dust obscured the advancing constable.

The angry bark of rifles blared frantically from the tunnel. Yontz fired slowly, and another tree toppled and swirled in a heli-circle before it bounced on the yellow dust. Yontz's face was strained. He pumped another shell into the chamber and half rose to stare through the dust. Wardlow was scoured from sight.

"If he can't be seen from here," the judge muttered hopefully, "then he can't be seen from there." He suddenly cursed. The dust hung in the air, like a yellow fog, and obliterated the black targets.

The judge wavered frantically, then ran forward. His boots hit into the shade as he dug his way up the slope. A puff of wind rose, the yellow dust stirred away. Like a schoolmaster wiping a sponge across a blackboard, the startled crowd sucked in its breath. Yontz was exposed. He drove heavily against the ground but a rifle bullet dug into the dirt and half-filled his body. Like watching an unfolding tableau, the crowd raised their eyes to the figure of Wardlow. He had reached the framework of the ore dump. His lower was clenched in his teeth, both hand guns were held wrist level and firing as he advanced into the black mouth of the tunnel. His guns barked wildly, interrupted by a fusillade of screaming rifle shots. A hush settled, and a vagrant rifle shot punctuated the light, like the last heavy hammer blow driven the final nail of the coffin home.

John Wardlow reappeared in the tunnel mouth. An explosive cheer arose from the watchers. He

shouted his gaze slowly and walked stuff-legged down the slope to where the judge lay. A team settled over the watchers who knew that the Maguire brothers would never come to trial. Scattered shakings of heads indicated that there would be need of a new judge for Pecos County Superior Court as they watched Wardlow raise the judge's heavy form.

The constable straightened and shouted: "Get up here and help me get this damned fool down, before his addled brains are fried in this hot sun."

The judge and his constable sat in the judge's back office. Foster's arm was bound against his chest and he moved awkwardly as he performed the ritual of pouring the drinks.

"Clown leave town yet?" he asked.

"Yep. Somebody painted a yellow stripe down his back."

"What's Pecos doing?"

"Nothing. But when I made my last round, there wasn't a customer in my bar. Folks heard that he loved these Maguire brothers to start this trouble. They haven't got it all figured out yet, but somehow it smells a little illegal. You know, like hiring a burglar-master to do your gunfighting. You're not guilty, exactly, of the bushwhacking bit."

"Don't go getting mixed up with legal interpretations, John."

"Nogee. And after this, don't you go making an ambush. I have to admit though, when you stood there all bare, like a naked jaybird, and drew their fire, it gave me a chance to rush the target."

"Well, Constable Wardlow, here's mud in your eye!" The judge raised his glass.

"Same to you, Judge of the Superior Court, Pecos County."



"We'll have to let him play . . . it's his head!"

## BUFFALO KILL

(Continued from page 22)

He turned behind a thin tree and tried for a shot at the buffalo but was unable to get a clear sight through the scrub. Further off in the trees he could hear the crashing as other heads found shelter and knew that he could not continue to run or he would be surrounded them. He had to find something big enough to climb and he had to find it fast.

He wheeled and ran out into the

clearing, twisting his head frantically in his search. And clear of the scrub he saw it, a dead, firm owl-shaped standing spook and anonymous amongst the paper-barks. As he hurried towards it, running along the line of timber, something thundered up behind him and he twisted desperately.

A horseman hammered past, wheeling short to come back at him and cut him off from the trees. It was Harding. He continued to wheel the horse in short rushes, shepherding Richards out into the clearing. Suddenly the horse reared away. Harding was laughing and shooting something Richards could not hear, then Harding lunged out his arm and turning Richards saw that the wounded bull had broken clear of the trees. It had seen him and was charging, head bobbing in an awkward rolling run.

Richards panicked.

Heart thumping beneath his ribs, clutching the rifle up to his chest with both hands, he ran for the trees on the opposite side of the clearing. And behind him he heard the hoofs, blasting the ground under the weight of the charging bull. It was all he could hear . . . the hoofs and Harding's high excited yelling . . . the hoofs and . . .

A rifle splanged. And as its harshness rolled away there was no sound in the clearing save the erratic blood-bursting thumping of his breathing.

Someone was shouting.

"Rin! Rin! I got him!"

It was Paula. Richards stopped running. He saw the bull down, saw heaving in the dust, saw that Paula had run out into the open, was running towards him.

Then a rifle barked again and dust kicked away to his left. The



"When we were engaged you opened your hotel to him as goodbye."

remembered Harding then and dropped. He fought to control his breathing. He had to get under cover. But there was no cover, just the dusty ground and buffalo baited grass and Harding hamstringing another shot at him. And Paula running . . . running into the line of Harding's rifle as she had run out to drop the bull for him.

Harding had dismounted then, was moving away from his horse. Richards seeing the rifle up but from his prone position could not get a good sight through the great stalks. Something ploughed into the ground inches from his head and he cursed. Harding had the range and would not miss again.

Richards jumped to his feet and suddenly his breathing was quiet and steady, his hands firm and knowing on the rifle as they had always been under fire. He was aware of a raging anger in him and beneath the anger a hard cold seriousness and it was just as it should have been. As it had always been in Korea.

He sighted carefully, struggling his cheek down on the stock, squeezing the shot off slowly. And as he fired pain sliced across his

hip, spun him half around, but did not drop him.

Harding seemed to crumple in slow motion. Dust puffed up softly as he hit the ground.

Then Paula was against Richards, clinging to him, laughing, sobbing. "I started to come after you just as the bullets began to rain. Harding must have heard your shooting and come to see what it was over here. Ken, oh Ken, he tried to kill you. He wanted the bull to get you. You shouldn't have run like that. You shouldn't have."

Richards held her tightly. "I know, darl. I know. He had me confused that's all. Something that happened in Korea. But he was wrong, wrong as hell, the poor soul." He tilted her head up and smiled down into her face. "I'll tell you about it sometime. Meanwhile, how would you like to help me empty a few bottles—before we have to start explaining all this?"

"I'd love it," she said. "And not on the ground."

Richards felt the warm fullness of her as she helped him toward the trees. He knew once and for all that Korea was a long useless time ago. ●

## THE QUIET LIFE

(Continued from page 8)

"There never has been the remotest connection except for those very few necessary moments and certainly no one would ever believe that anyone other than yourself had any cause for such fears. Moreover, I knew the letter."

The bottle of eye was almost empty now but I might as well have been drinking water for all the effect it had. I wished I hadn't given up smoking. Anything, anything, to settle me down.

"Letter?"

"That childish letter you wrote. Quite the touch of melodrama telling her what you'd arranged to be done to her if she so much reported. Still you obviously picked your words well and knew she would believe you. She must have put in couple of nights of sheer terror."

"She deserved them."

"Didn't it seem to you that having squandered once she might do so a second time?"

"That's why I said I'd taken that into account. I figured she would rather face me some night this week instead of spending weeks, months, years maybe, never knowing when I'd find it for her."

"So she had to spend weeks counting down?"

"I planned. 'Nope. Counting me.' I said. 'I reckon the figured selection might be the one out. Full love nest treatment. Black lace, low lights, soft music and perfume.'"

"And would it have been?—The one out?"

"Yes."

"Now listen, Charlie, who would you expect to believe that?"

"It's true. So help me," I said. "I wanted to scare her, sure. I wanted her to sweat it out, feel sick with terror, but that was going to be it. There's only two ways when you're made. Outside there's always a lot of ifs and maybe, the one could jump whole way. There's no telling. But inside, there's two ways. You fight to the knockout or you figure it's not worth fighting and you don't fight at all. That's me, man. No more violence. I've had it up to here. I tell you, I'm clean now and I'm staying clean."

"No," he said. "One contract and then you're clean."

"You're kidding."

"Do I sound as if I'm kidding?"

He didn't. My thoughts took a nosedive. Everything he said was true. Except because I'd screamed to the world, the cops, the press, what I would do to her when I got out. Motive, revenge. Evidence, even if I elaborated all my darkest fears, that would damn me forever and this fearless one wouldn't hesitate to use it. That stupid, naive, indomitable letter, telling her to expect me—or else the slash of a knife from a stranger's hand, any time, any

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these juvenile to make me pull, convincing enough to terrify her, to sway a jury.

"Who?"

"My wife."

So, it added up. He kills my old dame because no one can connect him to it. I kill his wife because no one can connect me with her. Real cool.

"What do I get out of it?"

"An alibi."

"Such as?"

"An airways ticket that proves you went to the country last night for a couple of days' vacation and a hotel booking. You take a seat in the next train, no need to book. Besides the hell you will find a safety deposit key. In the locker you will find the cancelled airways ticket in your name and the key

to your hotel room. There is no night porter. So long as you get into your room by dawn, no one will see you arrive. If anyone does see you they will think you had macramé and couldn't sleep. The airways ticket covers you for the crucial time as the lady's demise occurred well after your plane left.

"You got back in time. What would have stopped me?"

"Everything, my friend. There have been no outward bound trains or planes since."

"Then what about you?"

"I drove back in my own car which I'd already parked there. Clever, eh?"

"What about a cash?"

He laughed softly, a snigger at most. "Wait till you see the

dump," he said. "Society has burnt town. No cars, no dancing girls. Just the place for you to seek some sinners and solace."

"Solace?"

He snorted. "You may find some. You never know."

There was something that had been niggling at the back of my mind, and all at once it came to me.

"The letter?" I demanded.

"What about that?"

"That, Charlie, is the fly in your ointment," he said. "The only thing that could possibly make it look as if there was some put to your alibi, would be that letter, so I'm keeping that till you deliver. After this little matter is settled and you have been duly questioned, I will get in touch with you and give you your instructions. When you have delivered the goods, you'll get the letter."

"How do I know that?"

"Face the facts, chum. By that time we'll both need each other's co-operation. From then on it will be certain, all-in, because the vital link will have been forged. The letter will be the only clue to the link that could again separate us both."

It made sense.

"And your wife?" I jerked. "How does she come into the picture. What did she do?"

He laughed heartily. He must have had a very deep voice, his laugh was strictly of the bass

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vergency. "Why nothing, I guess. Absolutely nothing. That's the trouble. She won't give me a divorce."

"And there's someone else?"  
"You're so right."  
"Correct me if I'm wrong," I said. "But wouldn't that make you number one suspect?"

"Listen to the bright boy," he muttered. "Way the hell else would I go to all this trouble? This way I can get myself a watertight alibi, such a long conference with my bank manager."

"Wouldn't it be easier to live in sin?" I quipped.

"More expensive, too," he said. "My dear wife is worth a cool 20 thousand of which I at least need a slice. Believe me, I know what I'm doing."

He certainly did. If anyone deserved to get on, it was this whippersnapper creep. He appeared to have a mind as precise as a filing cabinet, everything in its place, everything with a label.

Dream or reality, it was like living in a play with all the dialogue mapped out, scenarios by experts.

Act one: the love nest. A red-head exuding drying blood and white flesh through pores of black lace, a setting for intimate love scenes, backdrop to murder.

Act two: a country pub. A lousy little hotel room with brown linoleum on the floor, a single oak bed with a horsehair mattress and white bedcover spotted with rust stains. A window with a grubby lace curtain and brown holland blind. Over in the corner, a wash-basin with a cold tap that won't stop dripping and a stool outlining the course the drops had taken.

The dialogue so phony, so starchy I wanted to laugh when they questioned me, yet I was scared enough to cry. Man, try it, some time and see for yourself! try and convince someone you haven't done something that you haven't done. Mad!

My instructions came in a plain manila envelope with a typewritten address.

I don't know what I expected but, whatever it was, it was more than I got. Not even a proper sheet of paper, just a page from an exercise book torn diagonally across the top and, on it, typed in capital letters, a name and address.

Even the name was a disappointment. Mary Smith! How dull could you get.

Unlike my Swengah, I didn't plan in advance, mainly because I knew if I did, I'd be unable to carry it out, so I went empty-handed, no gun, no knife, no nothing. Maybe at the back of my mind I planned to use one of her stockings, certainly I'd never be able to use my hands. Whichever way the socky crumpled, I went as I was.

I was still as I was — empty-handed, empty-headed — when she opened the door of her house, without any idea in my head of how I would deal with her.

Mary Smith, small, mouse-brown hair, unspectating as cold milk coffee on a winter's night? Not one year life.

She was ugly. Correction. Not ugly, by plain, with almond-shaped eyes in a yellow face but her body would have brought a bad head to life. She was wearing a down jersey dressed the played havoc with her awkward complexion but sculpted her figure to perfection, underplaying the smallness of her waist, emphasising the promising fullness of her breasts, the voluptuous curves of her hips.

"Yes?"  
Her voice was as coiffing as her body, low, husky, promising even.

Beyond her, I could see into the living-room, a large, spacious room designed for gracious living and packed with the most beautiful ornaments outside a museum of objects d'art.

"I heard you collect Venetian glass," I ad libbed.

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"Way you, I do."

"You'll think this is a frightful impertinence, but would you mind telling me a little about it?"

It pood off! Frightful impertinence, or not, she neither minded showing me her Venetian allies, nor the beauty of the bed chamber up the spiral staircase.

I still haven't woken up. Not properly. Smith may not have taken this into account, but he was happy enough to hand over the let-

ter in return for his freedom, and a settlement of \$10,000. Mary never questioned what I needed the money for, she was perfectly happy to give it to me and, as for the divorce, well she had to have that to marry me.

And, in case you're wondering, Mary Cleave doesn't look at all like Mary Smith. She wears colors that are becoming to her complexion and clothes that conceal her figure. After all, I like a quiet life, as I said before.

## HIS MONSTROUS SECRET WEAPON

(Continued from page 3)

"Would you believe it?" he told newspapermen in his David Street office in Manila. "When the San Francisco Conference divided up all the territories occupied by Japan in World War II, not a single nation had any claim to all of these islands."

Cleave cheerfully moved in to take advantage of this oversight. He made his own survey of the Spratlys and learned more about the islands than anyone else in history.

He discovered that virtually all the islands had readily marketable super-phosphates. The waters teemed with fish. On the beaches were sea cucumbers, also called beche-de-mer or trepang, much prized in Oriental countries for

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"Now see here! This is the last bus I'm going to miss because of you! are you going to flirt with me or aren't you?"



soap. Copra could also be produced from the coconut palms growing on several of the islands. At first he proclaimed a "Protectorate of Freedomland" by right of discovery and occupation. With more than 100 Filipinos, most of them adventurous young men and women, he sailed to Pagan which he declared was logically the first of the islands which should be colonised.

At a cost of 100,000 dollars, which he contributed, the settlers erected alga dwellings, a concrete block administration building, storage sheds, godowns, and other necessary structures. After this some constructed vinta outriggers and began commercial fishing. Others started copra production.

Clerna had made it plain from the first that the little protectorate was entirely peaceful in purpose. It would not be used as a base for any other nation. There would be no firearms on Pagan.

Despite all this, trouble quickly beset Freedomland. No sooner were the colonies settled on Pagan when several nations decided they had been neglecting strategic and profitable opportunity.

The French were the first. They sent a destroyer from Saigon, sailed importantly through the treacherous water surrounding Pagan and announced that all of the islands belonged to France. The Republic of South Vietnam was quick to follow suit and sent a gunboat to claim the islands.

Then the Chinese Communists screamed over Radio Peking that Clerna was a capitalist filibuster trying to seize territory belonging to the People's Republic of China for personal gain. In Formosa, the Nationalists listened to the broadcast. Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek picked up his pen. If the Communists could claim the islands, why not the Nationalists?

He ordered the old gunboat Nansu to proceed immediately to Pagan and lay formal claim to the island. By way of emphasis the Nansu then intercepted one of Clerna's supply ships and seized a "quantity of munitions" — some commercial dynamite.

This last outrage was too much for Clerna. In 1956 his protectorate was turned into a republic and he was elected president by acclamation. He established his seat of Government at 419 David Street in Manila and appointed an American, Donald W. Traynor, his foreign minister.

The Nansu continued to plague the island, returning repeatedly to search adjacent waters for "militant ships." The only other craft she intercepted was the little trading schooner, Pickle II, which in all innocence had departed from her course to escape the path of a typhoon.

It was a fantastic situation, as Juan Singsa, Commandante of Defense, admitted solemnly to Jim Peck. Never was there a more defenceless commandante. He had neither an army nor firearms.

"For the present at least, how-

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ever, no country laying claim to Freodomland appears ready to be accused of violent aggression. Instead they are trying to drive us off by threats and intimidation."

While his mate was recovering, Poole busied himself aboard the schooner. With King's help he gave the auxiliary engine a much needed overhaul and made other neglected repairs.

In the evenings he slipped on a T-shirt, changed from swim trunks to chinos, and visited with Dave Ritchie.

He spent many pleasant afternoons swimming or spearfishing with Marna. He enjoyed her company, and on Papeia the world, for the time being, seemed unimportant and remote.

Until the morning Juan Sinape sent for him.

"You will please get Senator Ritchie aboard your ship, Captain," he ordered sternly. "You will leave the territorial waters of this island immediately."

Poole looked at him, thunder-struck.

"We have received a direct radio message from the People's Republic of China," the comandante informed him grimly. "A war vessel is being sent to visit us from Papeia."

Poole gave a low whistle.

"You know the Chinese Comandante," the comandante continued coolly. "Now that they have finally decided to act, trouble is a certainty. I cannot take responsibility for your personal safety, nor prevent the capture of your vessel. The Communist Defense Minister, Peng Teh-huai, himself, has demanded that we evacuate the island."

"What are you going to do about it?" Poole asked bluntly.

The comandante shrugged his shoulders. He had reduced Manila about the situation. China would unquestionably appeal to the new president of the Philippines, Carlos Garcia, for assistance.

"But as you are aware, such diplomatic matters take time," he added. "Meanwhile, every able-bodied man and woman on the island will want to the utmost. This is now our home."

"What about the *Nansen*?" he

suggested. "Suppose you asked her to intercept the Communist war ship and let them fight it out?"

The comandante shook his head emphatically. "Appealing to the Chinese Nationalists for aid is unthinkable, captain. It would only encourage their claim to the islands. No, we must handle this ourselves. I suggest you sail from here before it is too late."

The interview was finished. Poole got to his feet and stood undecided. Comandante Sinape was acting for the best, he knew.

Despite this, he was reluctant to leave. He felt that it would be cowardly to run out on the Comandante, on Marna and all the others.

What the hell can I do if I stay, he reflected bitterly. Dave's stuff on the sick list and there isn't a damned thing aboard I can contribute to defense.

He was still going over the cargo manifest of the *Podica II* in his mind when an idea struck him. A fleeting grin loosened the grim line of his lips.

The idea wasn't exactly new. As a matter of fact, both the British and the Americans had thought of it more than 180 years ago. But it might work on an invading Communist commander, conditioned by Radio Peking's years of propaganda about enemy atomic bombs, germ warfare and secret weapons.

"Comandante," Poole said impulsively. "Did you every study the history of our American Revolutionary War?"

Juan Sinape's dark eyes scrutinized him sharply, plainly puzzled by the question.

"A little," he admitted cautiously. "We all have studied it in our schools."

"During the Revolutionary War the American frigate *Lee* captured the British supply ship *Nancy*," said Poole. "There were 800 British-made solar guns aboard the ship. George Washington called them 'town burning machines.' They were big tubes, six feet in circumference of polished steel and mirrors on tripods. They concentrated sunlight like a magnifying glass on watch crystal and they supposedly were capable of throwing a 'burning ray' for a distance of two miles."

"I don't know how effective those solar guns would have been if they'd been actually used, but Washington didn't find it necessary. He scared the British General William Howe without employing them as psychological weapons. The Americans made him surrender Boston without a fight."

"It might work, Comandante!" Poole was eager and persuasive. "I've got stuff in the cargo hold: a mirror, plenty of aluminum foil and wire to turn out one hell of a solar gun!"

Comandante Sinape hesitated. He was wary but not convinced by the American's enthusiasm. He voiced objection. It would take



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time to construct such a feature in the contrivance, time to test it. And what if it proved a failure?

"What have you got to lose?" Poole countered.

In the end the commandants yielded. The situation was desperate and he was ready to grasp at straws.

"It'll get started right away," Poole told him. "By this time tomorrow I'll have something to show you."

Back aboard the schooner he set to work with King. He didn't know what the original solar gun had looked like but this didn't matter. He reasoned that any contrivance which could concentrate and reflect powerful rays of sunlight would serve the purpose.

He fashioned a circular frame eight feet in circumference, using heavy fencing wire. King heated an odorous pot of glue in the galley and they stuck several thicknesses of aluminum foil to the frame.

With King's help, he brought the large mirror up from the hold and unwrapped it. The deckhand watched aghast when Poole smashed it into little pieces with a hammer.

Gluing the tiny pieces of mirror to the aluminum foil was the most painstaking part of the job. They spent several hours at it, angling the glass inward to catch the sunlight and focus it into a beam. When they had finished Poole made a swivel-top tripod from spare pipe and engine gear.

Even Commandant Sheng was impressed when he came aboard the *Poche II* to inspect it.

At Poole's suggestion palm leaves were piled up upon the beach and the solar gun was tested from the bow of the schooner. After some experimenting he was successful in throwing a concentrated beam of sunlight a third of a mile across the lagoon and directing it to the base of the pile of palm leaves.

He gasped at his wretch anxiously counting off the seconds. Then, a whisp of blackish smoke curled lazily upward from the beach. A few seconds more and the pile blazed up fiercely.

"Allah's wish Acree!" muttered King proudly.

Poole eyed the commandant in silence. They both had the same thought. The solar gun had severe limitations as an incendiary weapon. The sun would have to be in a favorable position in the sky to throw a ray. In the time it took to ignite even a dry inflammable pile from, modern incendiary guns could create havoc.

The commandant showed his disappointment. He had expected much more.

"I am very much afraid it will not be effective, Captain Poole."

"I know it and you know it," Poole agreed grimly. "But the Communists don't. I still think we

can use it to throw a hail of a score into 'em."

"Exactly what do you propose, Captain?" the commandant asked doubtfully.

Poole told him.

It wasn't until the following morning that the motorized junk, the *Shiao*, auxiliary war vessel of the People's Republic of China, Lt. Commander Sun Wing, commanding, approached the island.

At first, sighting the line of vines stretched across the opening into the lagoon, the lieutenant commander thought that the Pih-pins were preparing to evacuate in accordance with the demand of Defense Minister Peng Teh-huai. On drawing closer, however, he observed that the vines appeared to be uprooted and formed a flimsy barricade.

While he contemplated this obstruction and mulled over his orders to take possession of the island by peaceful means if possible, he became aware of an intense ray of sunlight moving slowly back and forth across the dock.

Following it to its source, he saw a shining disk on the coral near the villa to starboard. His eyes

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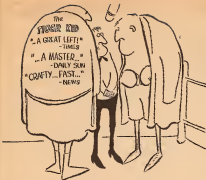
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water, swept by Wing's boat, settled on a mine some 20 yards away. After a few seconds under the concentrated blast from the beam, the mine exploded in a blast of red flame.

Commander Wing ducked instinctively. He ordered his crewmen to row quickly, before the devil-machine was turned on to them.

Other mines, farther down the line, suddenly exploded.

Ashore, Jim Poole chuckled. Some minutes later, Maria, her wet searings clinging stickily to her superb figure, came out of the surf and up to him.

"Did it work?" she asked. "I light the fuse the way you said, then swim underwater away from mine as fast as I can."

Poole pointed to the fast-fading skiff from the Tai Shan. "You did fine," he said to her.

Li Commander Sen Wing returned to the Tai Shan, lifted anchor and retired well out to sea.

"So far, so good," Poole remarked. "Now to put the second part of the plan in action and hope the Noses is listening."

The commandante handed his radio operator a message already prepared. It was addressed to Thomas Clavin in Manila and it read: "Communist Chinese warship Tai Shan now lying off Pagapas, Situation critical."

The message was sent out every half hour. In, as well as Sen Wing's message to Chungking long, was intercepted by the Noses off Charleston Reef some 125 miles to the northeast, exactly as the commandante and Poole had hoped.

During the night the Nationalist gunboat started south. A half hour before dawn her commanding officer, Lieutenant Min Kuo, order-

ed the crew to battle stations and maneuvered the Noses a few points to the east.

Less than 40 minutes later, and some eight miles from Pagapas, the Noses came out of the rising sun and opened up on the Tai Shan with her three-inch bow gun. Catching the equal half of the big junk broadside, she put four shells into her bow in the water line.

The next three shells raked the deck of the Tai Shan, killing seven seamen, two machine gunners and the beam. It was then that Li Commander Sen Wing admitted defeat and surrendered his stricken junk.

Two months later Captain Jim Poole found the correspondent of a statewide news association waiting for him on dock.

A few weeks ago there was an engagement between a Chinese Communist junk and a Nationalist gunboat in the Spratlys, off the coast of the Abo. It wasn't important. They were both small craft.

"What interests us though is that when the gunboat sank the junk and brought prisoners back to Taipei, the junk's commander, a Lt. Commander Sen Wing, told a pretty wild story to the Nationalists."

"He claimed that there was an American on the island armed with some sort of a monstrous secret weapon."

"Our Foreign man checked with the gambler skipper, a bad named Lieutenant Min Kuo. He said that the fellow it was at the Abo at the time and you might be the American."

"Yeah," Poole acknowledged. "I was on the island. But a secret weapon? Sounds like a lot of Noses to me."

"I was afraid you'd say that. Too damned fantastic to have truth behind it."

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## HELL-RAISING FEMALE BANDIT

(Continued from page 12)

military mind of Carlos Chavez-Garcia, most of the other bandits joined forces with her.

Carlos' feelings for Maria deepened; he was as if possessed by her. This fascinating, incomprehensible, unpredictable girl, who was constantly torn between vicious cruelty and tender affection for Carlos, flut after a while Carlos was beginning to sense a restlessness in her — she was thing of him.

More and more often she would seep into off alone to raid a small village or caravan, secretly hoping he would get killed during one of these expeditions.

Leading a squadron of bandits, Carlos one day attacked a small caravan of heavy wagons loaded with precious and semi-precious stones from the mines of Quetzaltenango.

Neering the wagons at full gallop, the bandits ran headlong into a wall of steel muskets. The wagons hid dozens of weapon-wielding Spanish foot soldiers. It was a well-laid trap. In minutes, more than half the number of bandits were dead or wounded.

Carlos wheeled his horse franti-

cally and gave the only possible command under the circumstances: "Escape! Every man for himself!"

Two days later, Carlos and the few survivors of the ambush struggled back into Maria's camp. They were badly beaten.

That night, when Carlos was surrounded in her quarters, three men grabbed him.

"To the dog! And the lion wall!" she ordered. He was linked to an upright post in the middle of the room. By the time Carlos collected his wits, the room had filled with a dozen bandits.

Maria whipped him mercilessly, and told him "Let this be a lesson to you, Captain! I do not need you any more. From this night, you are no better than any of the other coyotes who once followed in the footsteps of Maria Sanchez."

Carlos was through. Maria's guards manhandled and whip-marked him from his ankles to his neck and dumped him into his tent. All he could do was lie there, trying to recover. He had only a few hours in which to act.

When Maria's expectorators arrived to take the prisoner at sunrise, the tent was empty, the throats of the two guards slit from ear to ear. The alarm was spread through the camp and Maria sent patrols to scout the mountain trails. Her orders were to bring

back the head of Carlos Chavez-Garcia.

A week later, Carlos surrendered to a patrol of the viceroy's soldiers, who linked him to the execution rack.

When word got to Maria of Carlos' execution, her mind seemed to snap. Her army now numbered over a thousand men. She led them from the camp, her chestnut steed on always in the lead, day after day. She drove her army of followers relentlessly. Their successes became greater and greater.

Ordinary military strategy was ineffective. Maria led a guerrilla force that struck unexpectedly and was gone into the mountains before retaliation could be organized.

At this point a Spanish viceroy, General Jacobo Hidalgo de Morillon, came on the scene. He had distinguished himself against the Moors in North Africa. He understood the techniques of guerrilla and bandit warfare.

General Hidalgo laid out his plans carefully and secretly. He meant to beat Maria at her own game. He spent many months planning spies in Maria's camp.

But Maria's scheming mind was nearly equal to the general's. Some of the spies confessed, under torture, implicating others.

General Hidalgo was outraged. There was no longer time for subtle strategy. Maria Sanchez had

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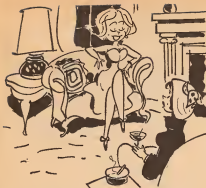
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to be stopped at any cost. The general immediately put a new plan into action.

A large caravan prepared to leave Mexico City for the east coast: 100 wagons, loaded to the axles with gold and silver. Originally, he planned to send at least 5000 soldiers — 1000 foot soldiers and 4000 cavalry — an escort to assure the reaching Vera Cruz.

General Hidalgo ordered the 100 wagons into the inner courtyard of his palace. In absolute secrecy he smelted the gold and silver into huge pigs — each weighing over a ton. He then ordered his most trusted cannoniers to peak a powder charge around the axle of each wagon.

Finally, preparations were completed. The heavy wagons were covered and sealed. The caravan assembled just outside the city walls. But instead of the 5000 soldiers originally intended for escort, he assigned only 1000 to accompany the wagons.

With a full contingent of troops, the bandits would be afraid to attack. With less than 1000 soldiers, they would suspect a trap.

Officers in the caravan were given secret orders to explode the axles on every wagon the moment the attack started.

The wagon train left Mexico City early one morning. Hidalgo was bitterly criticised for not sending along all his troops. But he held the remainder of his army camped just out side the city for three full days following the wagon's departure.

After devastating run-ins of Indian raids in a northern province,

General Hidalgo told his 4000 cavalry to mount and then be led there north — in the opposite direction from the Vera Cruz road.

When Hidalgo left certain he was not being followed, he returned his cavalry southeast. He drove them at full gallop toward the Vera Cruz highway.

Two days later, his scouts reported the wagon train several miles ahead in a valley beneath a low range of hills. The scouts described the ground around the wagons lined with Indian. Swarms of vultures circled low



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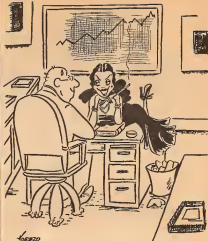
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"And when I come back to work here, I told myself I was going to have to match my big handsome boss!"

over the area. The scouts also described the large body of men camped near the wrecked wagon. The man appeared to be feverishly working to repair the axle.

The general needed to know little else. The 4000 cavalry moved to the attack.

Marta sat in the shade of one of the wrecked wagons. Her men labored to bolt new axles on the heavy frames. They were near exhaustion. A yell growled up and down the wagon line "Soldados!"

They were trapped without warning.

Marta instantly alerted up the situation. But with the indifference to danger that had carried her through hundreds of battles, she made a running jump on the bare back of a horse. Grasping the mane with both hands and kicking its flanks with her sandalled feet, she wheeled the animal up and down the wagon train shouting orders at her confused, frightened men. But it didn't work.

Then she was gone, riding recklessly toward the army of General Hidalgo.

It was a charge. More than 900 bandits were slain. Hidalgo's order was "No prisoners!"

For hours the soldiers rode back and forth among the disorganized followers of Maria Sanchez. Heavy cavalry columns swung from side to side. The ground was covered with mangled bodies.

Today the Vera Cruz Mexico City highway runs through this valley. A petrol station and restaurant stand where the wagon train was annihilated and more than a thousand men met their death.

General Hidalgo ordered Marta's head severed, and his men carried the grisly trophy back to Mexico City. For over a year the ghastly exhibit stared down from a silver spike at each traveller who passed through the Mexican capital.









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